

# THRILLING ADVENTURES

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10¢

FEATURING  
**SOUTH  
OF SUEZ**

A Complete  
Ponga Jim  
Novel  
By  
**LOUIS  
L'AMOUR**

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

VOICES OF THE  
WILDERNESS

An Exciting Western Novelet  
By **SYL MacDOWELL**

ART  
MICH

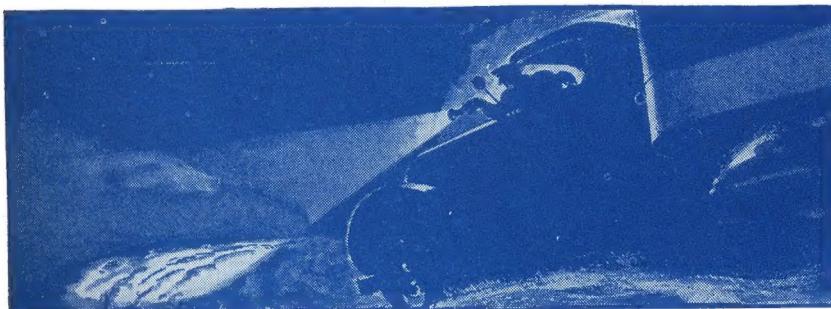
# "I RODE A JUGGERNAUT DOWN A CHUTE-THE-CHUTE!"

*A true experience of L. S. VANDIVER, Laramie, Wyoming*



"A WINDING RIBBON of glassy ice faced me as I nosed my big Diesel truck down Telephone Canyon, near Laramie, Wyoming, one dark winter night," writes Mr. Vandiver. "Behind me, on a twenty-eight foot trailer, rode 27,000 pounds of freight.

**"WITHOUT WARNING,** the lights went out! It was six miles to the bottom of the canyon . . . my left wheels were skirting a precipice . . . and those tons in back of me were shoving—and I mean *shoving*. It would have been suicide to use my brakes.



"**I WAS SKIDDING TOWARDS ETERNITY** when I remembered my flashlight. Its bright beam flooded the road ahead. Thanks to 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries, I drove the six miles safely, saving not only my life, but the \$12,000 truck and its 13½ ton cargo.

(Signed) *L. S. Vandiver*"

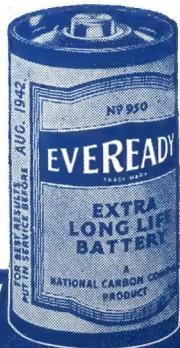
*The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.*

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UCC



# America Can't Wait Industry needs you NOW

## Defense Program Needs Trained Men

There is a tremendous shortage of skilled men in almost all branches of industry. Draftsmen, electricians, machine designers, machinists, are wanted for good jobs at fine pay. Executives too; foremen, superintendents, managers, are needed right now to handle the enormous demand for finished products of all kinds. If you are already in one of these fields, you owe it to your country, to your family, and to yourself to make yourself even more valuable, to climb and climb fast and help put through the most important program we have ever had to face.

### Opportunities Everywhere

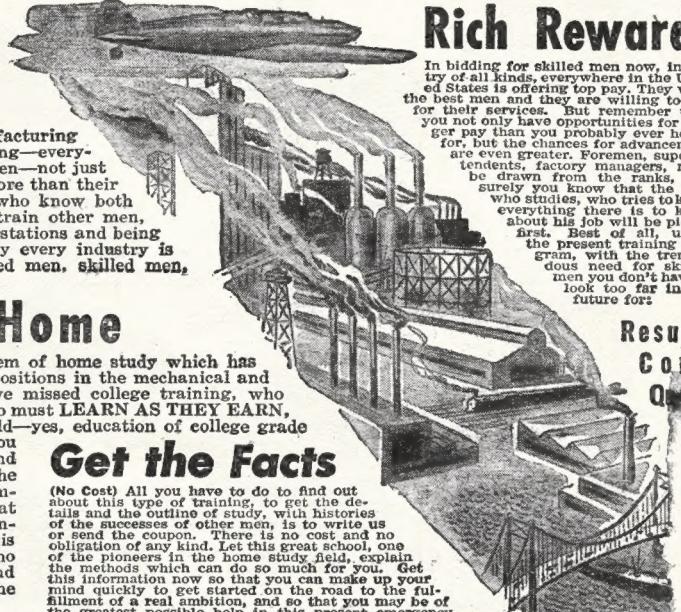
Home building, ship building, manufacturing plants, great utility projects, road building—everywhere you look you find a demand for men—not just ordinary workers, but men who know more than their fellows, who are better at their jobs, who know both theory and practice and can therefore train other men, thus rising to more and more important stations and being of greater and greater help. Practically every industry is included in those needing MEN, trained men, skilled men, men with ambition and punch.

### Learn at Home

Over 40 years ago we developed a system of home study which has helped thousands of men to important positions in the mechanical and business world. Those of you who have missed college training, who haven't the time to go away to school, who must **LEARN AS THEY EARN**, can get education in your particular field—yes, education of college grade right in your own home. Best of all, you can study when you have the time, and above everything else you will have the commendation and the respect of your employers in doing so. Rest assured that every superintendent, every factory manager, every general manager will have his eye on the man who pushes forward, who recognizes the great need of the day, and who has made up his mind to be one of the first to make good.

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Whenever trained men have been badly needed, business has been quick to say, "We welcome applications from American School advanced students and graduates." We maintain an employment placement service to help put you in touch with the best openings, and we make no extra charge of any kind for this service. Write now for an outline of home study training courses; check the coupon indicating your preference and mail it promptly.



### Rich Rewards

In bidding for skilled men now, industry of all kinds, everywhere in the United States is offering top pay. They want the best men, and they are willing to pay for them. Moreover, by becoming trained, you not only have opportunities for higher pay than you probably ever hoped for, but the chances for advancement are often greater. Foremen, superintendents, factory managers must be drawn from the ranks, and surely you know that the man who studies, who tries to know everything there is to know about his work will be chosen first. Best of all, under the present training program, with the tremendous need for skilled men you don't have to look too far in the future for:

Result  
Com.  
Qual.

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# THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. XL, No. 3

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

March, 1942



*A Complete Ponga Jim Novel*

## SOUTH OF SUEZ

By LOUIS L'AMOUR

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*A Complete Western Novelet*

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*and*

### THE GLOBE TROTTER

A Department

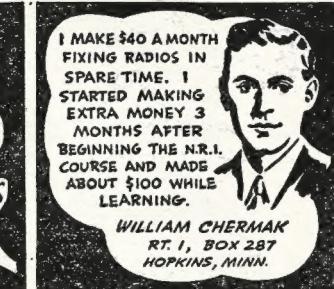
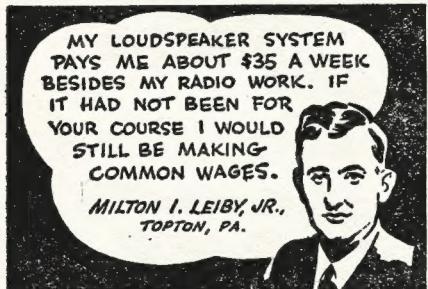
*Join Our World-wide Club! Coupon on Page 112 . . . . .* 10

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# Do You Want Success Like This in RADIO

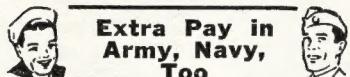


## Here's The Formula That Has Worked For Hundreds

If you're looking for a quick way to better pay, and a chance to get a good, permanent job in a field of real opportunity, here's the formula that has worked for the men you see above, and hundreds of others, too. It's not a "miracle cure" nor a "long-chance" operation. It is a time-tested, practical way to make \$5 to \$10 a week extra a few months from now, and to prepare for a full-time job paying up to \$50 a week as a Radio Technician or Radio Operator.

## Beginners Train at Home to Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

On top of increasing civilian interest in Radio, the Radio Industry is rushing to fill hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Defense Orders. Over 800 Broadcasting stations in the U. S. employ thousands of Radio Technicians and Radio Operators with average pay among the country's best paid industries. Repairing, servicing, selling home and auto Radio receivers (there are more than 50,000,000 in use) gives jobs to thousands. Many other Radio Technicians take advantage of the opportunities to have their own service or retail Radio business. Think of the many good pay jobs in connection with Aviation, Commercial, Police Radio and Public Address Systems. N. R. I. trains you to be ready when Television opens new jobs.



Every man likely to go into military service, every soldier, sailor, marine should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty at pay up to 6 times a private's base pay.

## Many Make \$5, \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Nearly every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part-time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radio sets. I give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get Radio parts and instructions for building test equipment, for conducting experiments that give you valuable practical experience. You also get a modern Professional Radio Servicing Instrument. My fifty-fifty method—half working with Radio parts, half studying my lesson texts—makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating, practical.

## Find Out How I Train You For Good Pay in Radio

Mail the coupon below. I'll send my 64-page book **FREE**. It tells about my Course; the types of jobs in the different branches of Radio; shows letters from more than 100 of the men I trained so you can see what they are doing, earning. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postal.

J. E. SMITH, President  
Dept. 2C09 National Radio Institute  
Washington, D. C.

THIS **FREE** BOOK HAS SHOWN HUNDREDS HOW TO MAKE GOOD MONEY

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 2C09  
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Mail me **FREE** without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Name .....  
Address .....  
City ..... State .....

I Trained These  
Men at Home  
I Will Train  
You Too



# Would you give as little as 7¢ a day for Music Lessons?



## Didn't Dream She Could Learn So Quickly!

"I DIDN'T dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. . . . I had always heard it couldn't be done. You can imagine my surprise when after 3 or 4 weeks I found I could play real tunes. Now when I play people will hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time. Any person who takes your piano course and studies it cannot help but learn to play."—H. C. S., California.



### FOUND ACCORDION EASY

"I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes \*H. E. from Canada. "But thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."



### AMAZED FRIENDS

"This course has been very interesting. Words cannot express how I have enjoyed it. My friends seem very much pleased with my playing; they can hardly believe I learned without a teacher."—E. G., Atlanta, Ga.



Music is the magic key to friendship, fun, romance. The person who can play a musical instrument is always sure of a welcome. Why not let music open the door for you to a happier, richer life? Mail the coupon and find out how easily and inexpensively you can learn at home.

\*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by Professional Models.

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*Amazing Print and Picture Method Teaches Thousands to Play in Their Own Homes*

THINK of it! For just about the few pennies you spend for your daily newspapers, YOU CAN LEARN MUSIC! You can learn to play your favorite musical instrument. *Any* instrument—piano, saxophone, violin, guitar, accordion, etc. What's more, you can learn right in your own home, in spare time!

Actually, your music lessons cost as little as 7¢ a day. And that includes *everything*—instruction, sheet music, personal Advisory Service. No extras of any kind, nothing more to pay.

## Easy as A-B-C

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Find out about this easy, money-saving method at once. If you want to learn music but are hesitating because you may be drafted, we have made special provisions for those who are called. Mail coupon below for illustrated free booklet giving complete information on how you can learn to play any instrument in your own home. Free print and picture sample included. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York City. (Forty-Fourth year. Established 1898.)



Look at these notes—they are F-A-C-E. Simple, isn't it? You are already learning to read music. It's easy to play, too. A new invention, the "Note-Finder," locates each note for you on the keyboard.

### Send for Print and Picture Sample

U. S. School of Music, 2943 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.  
I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and Free Print and Picture Sample.

Piano	Cello	Trombone	Drums and Traps
Violin	Hawaiian	Cornet	Ukulele
Guitar	Guitar	Trumpet	Organ
Piano Accordion	Tenor Banjo	Flute	Modern Elementary Harmony
Plain Accordion	Mandolin	Piccolo	
Saxophone			

Have You  
Instrument?.....

Name .....

Address .....

City .....

□ Check here if under 16 years of age.

# The **NEW OPPORTUNITY** in .. ACCOUNTING ..

—and how **YOU** can take advantage of it

**N**EVER before has there been as great an opportunity as now faces efficient bookkeepers and accountants.

You know, of course, that accounting has always been a profession of outstanding opportunity—a field in which the capable, trained man could go faster and farther than in almost any other field. But we believe that all past opportunities are going to be surpassed in the next five years.

And here's why:

In the first place, the defense situation has accelerated and complicated business. Hundreds of new plants, hundreds of others expanded, priorities, shortages of raw materials, some companies shifting to new products, and millions more men at work necessitate more bookkeeping and accounting—both by government bodies and by private industry.

Then our governmental policy forces the keeping of better and more complete records in every office and plant. It is not a matter of choice with any firm—it is necessity.

For instance Federal Securities Act, with its insistence upon publicity of *complete* facts about every company selling its securities publicly, compels more frequent and more accurate financial state-

ments—and these in turn call for more and better accounting.

Then the Social Security tax, the unemployment regulations, the Wages and Hours Act, the Excess Profits tax and other taxes necessitated by national defense—all center around more complete accounting records.

Thus there is an insistent and growing demand for bookkeepers and accountants, a demand that already exceeds the supply and is still growing. This goes all the way along the line from routine bookkeepers to executive accountants. And it seems likely to increase much farther.

## Ask for the Facts

We need not tell you what that means in opportunity for the capable man already in accounting and for the able man who gets into accounting now. Nor need we argue for the practicality and value of LaSalle training in Accountancy—over 500,000 men and women, and 2,000 C. P. A.'s have already tested and proved that.

The only question is about *you*—whether you fit into this field and whether you can and will prepare yourself adequately. For accounting is no magic wand to

summon success—it demands much from the man whom it rewards highly.

You can answer that question wisely only when you know the facts. And the coupon below will bring you full facts about these demands and opportunities in accounting today together with the details about the LaSalle home-study training in Accountancy.

If you are dissatisfied with your present situation—and in earnest about achieving success—get the facts—use the coupon—NOW.



I'd like to see whether I should take up accountancy. Send me, without obligation or cost to me, your booklet, *Accountancy, the Profession That Pays*, and full information about your Accountancy Training program.

### Higher Accountancy

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Present Position.....

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MEMBERS OF YOUR FAMILY

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For Auto  
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Accidental Death

The figures shown above represent the  
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Gentlemen: Without obligation, please send me at once complete information on how to get your Family Life Policy for **FREE** inspection.

Name .....

Address .....

City ....., State .....

# How to Make YOUR Body Bring You FAME ...Instead of SHAME!

ARE YOU  
Skinny?  
Weak?  
Flabby?

Will You Let Me  
Prove I Can Make You  
a New Man?

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs.! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only HALF-ALIVE.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And now I'd like to prove to you that the same system can make a NEW MAN of YOU!

## What Dynamic Tension Will Do For You

I don't care how old or young you are or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps — yes, on each arm — in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day — right in your own home — is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice new, beautiful suit of muscle!

## Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, peopless? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details

about "Dynamic Tension" and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful HE-MAN.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely NATURAL method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun. "Dynamic Tension" does the work.

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your strength through "Dynamic Tension," you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the DORMANT muscle-power in your own body—watch it increase and multiply into real, solid LIVE MUSCLE.

My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And, man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to BUILD MUSCLE and VITALITY.



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For My  
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"The World's  
Most Perfectly  
Developed Man."  
As he looks to-  
day, from actual  
untouched snap-  
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I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name ..... (Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....



## FREE BOOK "Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became NEW MEN in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped THEM do. See what I can do for YOU! For a regular bill, send for this book today, AT ONCE. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-R, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

# The GLOBE TROTTER



**H**ELLO, Americans! Things have certainly been popping in this old world of ours since the *Globe Trotter* last sat down to his typewriter. We have all embarked upon the greatest adventure that any American will be asked to undertake during his lifetime, and to endure to the last drop of our stamina. Nowadays War isn't something that is fought on fixed fronts in far corners of the Globe. It is something that is just as likely to come into your own home town—to your house, or mine. The field for the long-range bomber or for carrier-borne craft is almost unlimited. So let's all plan to give our best, now that the clarion call has been sounded.

Our people in the outposts in the Pacific have already demonstrated that they are ready to face the foe, after taking the disheartening brunt of the first surprise attacks of the Japs. Luzon Island and the City of Manila have taken their place in American history and have written pages that might well be etched in gold, and will be forever remembered.

Not many years ago, a party of which I was a member journeyed into Manila while on a jaunt through the Far East. All of us were fascinated by the modern equipment everywhere in evidence. I recall a young Netherlands Indies newspaperman who stood beside me on the deck of a boat that carried us from Java and Borneo. His eyes were bright and amused, as I know mine must have been also as we gazed toward Intramuros and the southern side of the river with the new Port district.

"This is really a world harbor!" my Dutch friend declared, and from where I stood I had to agree he was right.

After threading our way past the hundreds of islands, and coming to a certain realization that the products developed in the Far Eastern archipelagoes were myriad, we could understand the need for a world harbor within easy steaming distance.

"We'll drop down to Ermita tonight," suggested the Netherlander, and from his tone of voice I knew that what he meant to show me would be *something*.

At one time Ermita was the most colorful part of Manila for the off-the-beaten track adventurer who was able to take care of himself. It is beyond the city wall, and there came the sailors from all parts of the

world. One little Philippine grog shop there, with tables that carried the elbows of many colorful races, made quite an impression on me, I recall.

The lighting arrangements in the place were never adequate, but this wasn't always the fault of the lamps. Smoke hung in the place in clouds, so thick you could cut it with a knife, as the saying goes, and the motley garb of some of the sailors reminded me of tales I heard of pirates who once hung around the ports in our own West Indies. Shades of Captain Kidd, Morgan and Blackbeard might have been conjured out of that drifting gray haze in the Ermita grog shop. The idea of pirates in Ermita isn't so far-fetched, at that. At least it wasn't years ago. In those days, plenty of Moro pirates preyed upon the fishing boats and small traders that went about among the Dutch East Indies, the Philippine Archipelago and all of Melanesia.

Dirk Van Dorn—that was the name of my Dutch friend—knew a good many of the *habitués* of the place we had selected in Ermita, and his information was both interesting and amusing. We chatted about trips to the Celebes and down along the coast of Australia that made one feel that these sailors working for the merchant navies of our new allies really know what it is all about. I needed no diagram to know they can be counted upon not only to hold a tiller, but also to manipulate the triggers of a machine-gun or anti-aircraft weapon.

## *Ali, The Sailor*

One old Mohammedan to whom my attention was called was particularly interesting. He made his base in the Sulu Islands, the only possession of these United States of ours that has a Moslem Sultan as its legal ruler. Ali commanded a fleet of four vessels, and was, by the way, quite a local potentate. His Lascar sailors knew little English, and only a smattering of Dutch, but they recognized the warm clasp of friendship, the universal language there never is any mistaking.

When Dirk suggested a walk down to Malate, old Ali came along with us, and somehow he managed to make us enjoy the evening more, because of his companion-

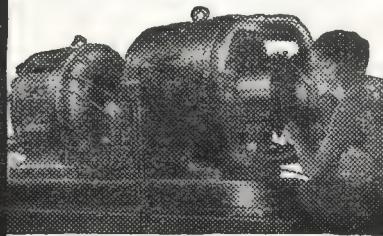
*(Continued on page 12)*

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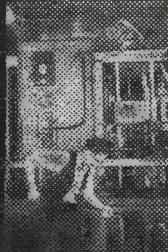
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## THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 10)

ship. He seemed to be a permanent fixture in the Philippine Islands, and we were youthful inquirers. He spoke of Malate as though he had personally taken part in the several actions there which long ago became history.

"Over there," he told us once, as he pointed a gnarled finger, "is where Limahong, the Chinese pirate, came in to attack the islands. That was back in Fifteen-seventy-four when Manila was only two years old."

Dirk laughed, for he also knew his island history.

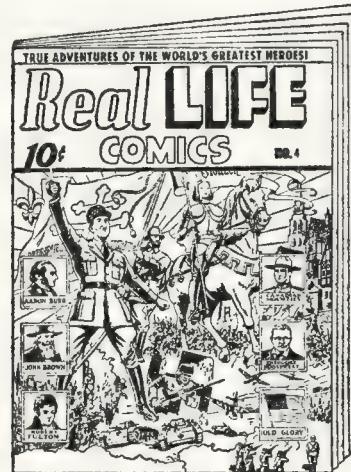
"Limahong thought he'd find things rather easy, but they didn't work out that way," he explained.

"Your Dutch navigators were among the first to realize the commercial possibilities of the Islands. weren't they, Dirk?" I asked interestedly, though of course that is a fact of common knowledge.

The Netherlander was rather proud of this comment whenever it was made, however, so immediately Dirk launched into a Dutchman's version of the visits of Admiral Houtman in 1596 and 1597 and the opening of the trade with Holland. I had to admit that the enthusiastically detailed account freshened my interest.

Merely looking over this section of Manila Harbor, which has been subjected to so many attacks in the last four hundred years, is enough to give any observer the impression that it was always destined to make history; probably always will be. Those stories of ancient struggles had their

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interest—then—but now that we are in the midst of a conflict for our own interests in the Philippines, that all pales into insignificance.

The most lasting impression I gained from all my young Netherlands friend told me that memorable day was one that has now come to me with renewed force. That is, that four of the countries that originally came to the islands to improve the condition of the natives, to teach them the value of overseas commerce, and to impress upon the folk the importance of improved sanitary conditions—civilization, in fact—are now banded together to assure the independence of these same people. America, Britain, the Dutch East Indies and China have all contributed their part in transforming the Philippine nation into a modern, up-and-coming commonwealth. These contributions to their welfare have not been entirely in recent years, either, but date from the visits of Limahong and Houtman in the 1500s, of Draper and Cornish in the 1700s, and representations of the United States in the last two centuries.

#### Native Carnival

During that afternoon's visit of mine in Ermita, Ali contributed as much to my historical knowledge as did Dirk Van Dorn. But when Ali had temporarily exhausted his chronicles and had left us, Dirk and I decided to drive along the Luneta. This is the large city park lying outside the walls of the Intramuros. It was February, and in nearby Wallace Field, the happy voices of the Philippine men and women, and the laughter of their children,

(Continued on page 104)

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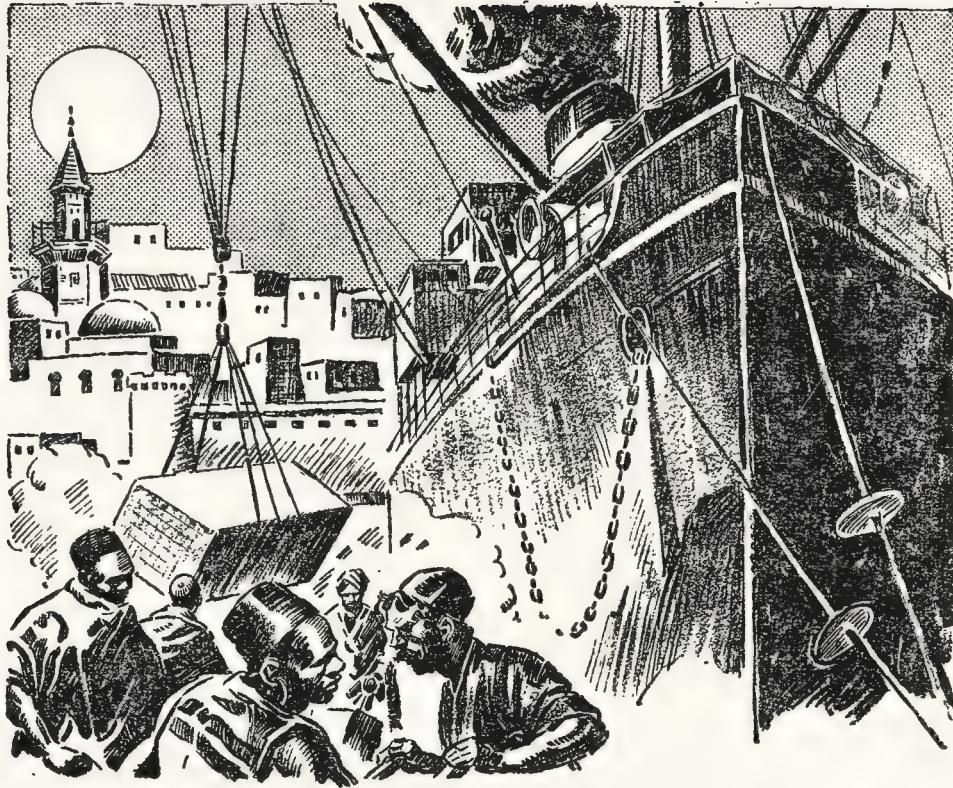
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# A Complete Ponga Jim Novel



Ponga Jim grabbed  
desperately, catch-  
ing his attacker by  
the arm



# South of Suez

By LOUIS L'AMOUR

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*In the Teeming Near East, Where Plot and Counterplot Boil in the Stew of Intrigue, Ponga Jim Mayo Hurls into Action to Halt an Evil Plan for "Secret Weapon" Murder!*

## CHAPTER I

### *Strange Battle-Wagon*

THE heavy concussion of the first shell brought Ponga Jim Mayo out of his bunk, wide awake in an instant. He was pulling on his shoes when he heard the whistle in the speaking tube.

"Skipper?" It was "Gunner" Millan. "We're running into a battle! Can't see a thing but red flashes yet, about three points on the starb'rd bow. Sounds like a battle-wagon."

"Put her over to port about four degrees," Ponga Jim said quietly. "Have the watch call Brophy and get the gun crews topside."

He got up, slid into his dungarees, and slipped on the shoulder holster with the .45 Colt. There would be no need for it at sea, but he had worn the gun so long he felt undressed without it.

When Ponga Jim reached the bridge the sky was lit with an angry glow of flame. Two freighters of the convoy off to the starboard were afire, and something was lifted toward the sky that looked like the stern of a sinking ship. They could hear the steady fire of six-inch guns, then the heavy boom of something much bigger.

**S**ECOND Mate Millan came toward him along the bridge, swearing under his breath.

"Skipper," he said. "I must be nuts, but I'd swear that gun wasn't smaller than an eighteen-inch, and there's nothing afloat carries a gun that big!"

"Sounds like it," Jim said briefly. "Might be a sixteen. The *Tirpitz*, maybe. But you wouldn't think they'd gamble a battleship in waters as narrow as the Red Sea."

The blazing wreck of one freighter was directly opposite them, and suddenly a low, ominous blackness moved between them and the blazing ship. For a few minutes it was clearly outlined against the red glow of flame.

Squat, black, and ugly, the monster glistened in the reddish light. It was built low, and completely covered by what appeared to be a steel shell. Even as they looked they saw the muzzle of a heavy gun belch flame. A big freighter, almost a mile away, was attempting to escape, yet even as they watched the shell struck it amidships.

Suddenly, but with every move so perfectly detailed as to seem like a slow motion picture, the distant freighter burst. The amidships vanished and the bow and stern seemed to lift away from it, then fell back into the flame-tinged water. Then there was a slow rain of black débris.

"Gun crews standing by, sir," First Mate "Slug" Brophy said, as he came

up. He saluted snappily, but he was scowling as he looked off across the water. "What the devil kind of a craft is that?" he demanded. "Looks like she was a sea-going tank."

Ponga Jim nodded. "It's what I've been wondering someone didn't do," he said crisply. "That's a new battleship. No elaborate superstructure, no basket masts or turrets. She's completely covered by a steel shell, and probably bomb-proof. She's built along the lines of a streamlined *Merrimac*."

"Lucky that fire's in her eyes an' we're back here," Slug said. "One shell from her and we'd be blown so high we'd starve to death falling back."

"Yeah," Jim studied the warship through his glass, then glanced ahead. "Gunner, lay all five guns on that baby. I'm going to give her a broadside and then run for it."

"You're nuts!" Brophy exploded. "Why, Chief—"

"You heard me," Ponga Jim said sharply. "Get going."

He stepped into the wheelhouse.

"Selim," he said to the pock-marked, knife-scarred man at the wheel, "aren't we abreast of the old smuggler's passage through the reef? It gives us about five fathoms, doesn't it?"

Selim nodded, lifting his eyes from the compass.

"I take her through?" he asked.

Ponga Jim studied the mystery ship ahead thoughtfully, then the nearing bulk of a large rocky island.

"Yeah," he said. "We'll fire that barge a broadside, then slip around that island and through the reef passage. They can't follow us, and blacked out the way they have us these days, we'll be invisible against that rocky shore. We got a chance."

He stepped back to the bridge and lifted his megaphone.

"You may fire when ready, Gridley!" he said, and grinned.

The crash of the five 5.9s left his ears momentarily dead and empty. The freighter heeled sharply over.

With his glasses on the warship, Ponga Jim waited for the *Semiramis* to recover.

"All right, Gunner," he called. "Once more!"

He had his glasses on the warship when the salvo struck. He scowled, then spun on his heel.

"Hard-over!" he snapped crisply. "Show them our stern, if anything." He stepped to the speaking tube. "Chief," he called, "give me all she's

has the biggest, best, and most efficient navy afloat, but we haven't anything as invulnerable to attack as that ship!"

Behind them a gun boomed, and off to the left a huge geyser of water lifted toward the sky. Ponga Jim glanced aft, then looked at the black bulk of the rocky island. Selim was cutting it close, but no one knew the Red Sea better than he did.

The *Semiramis* steamed straight



PONGA JIM MAYO

got! I don't want to use the telegraph. Jangles too much. We're in a spot, so keep her rolling."

Slug Brophy and Gunner Millan had returned to the bridge. The squat first mate wiped his face with a blue handkerchief.

"You sure pick 'em big when you want trouble!" he observed. "See those five-point-nines slide off that shell? Like rice off a turtle's back! What kind of a ship is that, anyway?"

"That ship," Ponga Jim said quietly, "can destroy British and American naval supremacy! The United States

ahead, and then at a low word from Selim, slowed to half speed as he turned the ship at right angles to her course. Ponga Jim stared into the darkness ahead, hearing the roll of the surf on the coral reef. He put his hand up to his forehead, to find he was sweating.

Brophy stood close beside him, staring down at the black, froth-fringed reef dead ahead.

"You sure this guy knows what he's doing?" Slug muttered. "If he doesn't—"

"He does," Mayo said quietly.

"Selim was a smuggler in this sea for several years. He knows every cove and passage in the eleven hundred miles of it."

As if to prove his statement, the reef suddenly seemed to open before them, and an opening, invisible until they were close up, appeared in the reef.

In a matter of seconds they were through and in the clear water of the inside passage....

**T**WO days later the *Semiramis* steamed slowly into the harbor at Port Tewfik, and moved up to the place at the dock that had been made ready for them.

"Mr. Brophy"—Ponga Jim turned to the chief mate—"get the hatches off and the cargo out of her as quick as you can. Take nothing from anybody, use any gear you need, but it must get out. Also, I want a man at the gangway every hour of the day and night. Nobody comes aboard or leaves without my permission. Also, I want one man forward and one aft. All to be armed. Understand?"

"You must be expecting trouble," a cool voice suggested.

Ponga Jim turned to find himself facing a square-shouldered young man with a blond mustache, and humorous blue eyes. He was a slender man with a narrow face, dark, immaculate, and with a military bearing and had just boarded the *Semiramis* with a companion.

"William!" he exclaimed. "What in time are you doing in Egypt? Thought you were in Singapore?"

Major William Arnold shrugged his shoulders.

"Trouble here, too," he said. "Heard you were coming in, so thought I'd drop down and see you." His gaze sharpened. "Have any trouble coming up from Aden?"

"We didn't," Ponga Jim said drily, "but we saw a convoy get smashed to hell."

"You saw it?"

Ponga Jim was nodding as Major Arnold quickly added:

"Jim, let me present Nathan Demarest, our former attaché at Bucharest. He's working with me on this job."

"Glad to know you," Ponga Jim said, then he looked back at Arnold. "Yes, we saw it," he said briefly, and went on, as his glance went back to Demarest, "Arnold will tell you that I don't run to convoys, so we were traveling alone. About six bells in the middle watch I got a call and got on deck to find a big warship blasting the daylights out of the convoy. Only one destroyer remained in action when we came up to them. And that not for long."

"A ship?" Arnold demanded. "Not submarines?"

"A ship," Mayo repeated. "A ship that couldn't have been less than forty thousand tons. She was streamlined, completely shelled over like a floating fort, and she mounted eighteen-inch guns."

"Your friend Captain Mayo is a humorist," Demarest suggested to Arnold, smiling. "There is no such ship."

"I'm not joking," Ponga Jim said stiffly. "There was such a ship, and we saw it."

**A**RNOULD looked at his friend thoughtfully.

"What happened, Jim?" finally he asked.

"We were coming up in the darkness and were unseen. I gave them two salvos from my guns, then we slipped around an island and got away."

"You hit her?"

"Yes—direct hits—and they didn't even shake her. Just like shooting at a tank with a target rifle."

Demarest's face had hardened. "If this is true we must get in touch with the Admiralty," he said. "Such a ship must be run down at once."

"If you'll take my word for it," Mayo said slowly, "I'd advise being

careful. This ship is something new. I don't believe bombs would have any effect on her at all. She looks like another secret weapon."

Ponga Jim Mayo glanced at the winches.

The booms were being rigged, and in a few minutes the cargo would be coming out of the freighter.

"Is this what brought you here, William?" he asked. "Or something else?"

"Something else," the major said. "Have you heard of Carter's death? Ambrose Carter, the munitions' man? He was found shot to death in his apartment near Shepheard's in Cairo three weeks ago. Then General McKnight was poisoned, and Colonel Norfolk of the CID who was investigating, was stabbed."

"McKnight poisoned?" Ponga Jim exclaimed. "I heard he died of heart failure."

"That's our story," Arnold agreed. "We mustn't allow anyone to know, Jim. But those are only three of the deaths. There have been nine others, all of key men. Some poisoned, some shot, one stabbed, two found dead without any evidence of cause of death, others drowned, strangled, or snake-bit."

"Snake-bit?"

"By an Indian cobra. The thing had been coiled in his bed. When it bit him he died before help could get to him. Jim, they called me here because these deaths can't be explained. Carter, for instance, was an acknowledged pro-Nazi, a former friend of Hitler's. If it weren't for that, it would seem logical the Nazis were starting a reign of terror, killing off the leadership for a major attack in the Near East."

"If not the Nazis," Jim protested, "then who could it be?"

"I wish I knew." Arnold's eyes narrowed. "But you'd better come along and tell this to Skelton. He's in charge here in Port Tewfik. The man who will have to know and to act."

## CHAPTER II

### *Death Strikes the Semiramis*



SEATED in the office of Anthony Skelton, two hours later, Ponga Jim Mayo repeated his story, quietly, and in detail. Two other men were there besides Demarest and Arnold. One, he was introduced to as Captain Woodbern, of the Navy. The other was General Jerome Kernan.

Before Ponga Jim's story was completed, Skelton was tapping his desk impatiently. Captain Woodbern was frankly smiling.

"Major Arnold," Skelton said abruptly, "I've heard a great deal of your ability. I've also heard of the work of Captain Mayo has been doing in the Far East. Which makes me the more surprised at your taking our time, Major, with such an obvious cock and bull story. This Captain Mayo evidently has a peculiar sense of humor, or is susceptible to hallucinations. Such a story as his is preposterous on the face of it!"

Arnold stiffened. "I know Captain Mayo too well, Mr. Skelton," he replied stiffly, "to doubt his word. If he says this story is true, then I believe it is true!"

"Then you're more credulous than any Intelligence officer should be!" Skelton snapped.

"Captain Mayo evidently saw something," Captain Woodbern said, smiling, "but I'm afraid the darkness, the battle, the flames, and the general excitement caused his imagination to work a little overtime."

General Kernan turned slightly in his chair. He was a big man with a hard jaw, a cold eye, and a close-clipped mustache.

"Mayo isn't the type to be seeing things, Skelton," he said. "Major Arnold has known him for some time,

and his work has been valuable. I want to hear more of his story."

Skelton glanced down at some papers on his desk. "We'll see that proper investigation is made," he said shortly. "In fact, we have already ordered two destroyers to the scene."

Ponga Jim leaned forward. "Then Mr. Skelton," he said quietly, "you've sent two destroyers to destruction. Either they will return, having found nothing, or they'll never come back." He got up abruptly. "Thanks for believing my story, General. As for you, Skelton, I'm not in the habit of having my word questioned. All I can say or do about that here and now, is to assure you that you are following the same trail of incompetence and smugness of others who didn't believe Hitler would attack Britain, did not believe in parachute troops, or that the Japs would bomb Pearl Harbor and the Philippines while suing for peace. Well, do what you choose. I shall investigate further myself!"

Skelton's eyes blazed.

"No," he said sharply, "you won't! In the Far East your blunderings may have been occasionally convenient, but we want no civilian interference here. You make one move to investigate or to interfere and I'll have the *Semiramis* interned for the duration!"

Ponga Jim smiled suddenly. He leaned his big brown fists on the edge of the desk and looked into Skelton's eyes.

"Listen, pal," he said coldly, "you may have a lot of red tape around the throats of other better men than you. But I'm not subject to your orders, and I'll sail when and where I please. If you want to intern my ship, I've got five-point-nines and plenty of ammunition. You'll think you've tackled something. When I get ready to sail, I'm sailing. Stop me if you feel lucky."

He glanced at Arnold, whose face was white.

"Sorry, William, but you can't help

that. Be seeing you." He strode from the room.

Skelton's face was deathly white. "I want that man put under arrest, and his ship interned!" he snapped.

**G**ENERAL KERNAN got to his feet.

"You're starting something with the wrong man, Skelton," he said smoothly. "If necessary Captain Mayo would shoot his way out of harbor, or sink trying."

"Nonsense!" Skelton snapped.

"No." Kernan was looking after Mayo thoughtfully. "The man's a Yank, but I was doubting if they had any left like him. Now that I know they have, I feel a lot better. Mayo's another of the school of Perry, Farragut, Decatur, and Hull."

Nathan Demarest left the room quietly, glanced down the hall along which Mayo had gone, then stepped into an empty office and picked up the telephone.

Ponga Jim walked swiftly down the street, then stopped in a cornerplace for a drink. When he turned to leave, he saw a slim, wiry man sitting at a table near the door. The man did not look up, but something in the man's attitude made Mayo suspicious. He would almost have sworn it was the same man he had seen loitering outside Skelton's office as he left. He scowled. Who would want him followed in Suez?

The quay was a litter of piled barrels and cases, of gear and bales. Ponga Jim was just passing a huge crane whose bulk forced him to the edge of the dock, when a black body catapulted from the darkness and smashed him with a shoulder, just hip-high. He felt himself falling, and grabbed desperately, catching his attacker by the arm. They fell, plunging into the black water with terrific force, but even as they sank Ponga Jim felt his attacker's arm slip from his grasp, and the next instant the

man had drawn a knife and lunged toward him.

Ponga Jim dived, and felt the hot blade of the knife along his shoulder. His lungs all but bursting he slammed a punch into the man's belly. He saw his attacker's mouth open, but the man was a veritable fiend, and he lunged again with the knife, teeth bared. Ponga Jim pushed away, kicking the man in the belly. Then they broke water.

Instantly, the fellow took a breath and dived, but Ponga Jim went down with him. At one time Ponga Jim had been a skin diver, for pearls. The swift thought flashed now that this fellow was good, and he had a knife, but—

The man swung in the water, his body as slippery as an eel's, then he lunged at Ponga Jim with the knife. But Mayo was too fast. He dived again, catching the man's wrist. Turning the arm, he jerked it down across his shoulder with terrific force.

Then he pulled free, smashing a fist into the fellow's belly for luck. As he swam he could see the man sinking, his teeth bared, his mouth leaving a trail of bubbles. The arm was broken.

Ponga Jim swam to a small boat dock and scrambled from the water. For a moment he stood there, dripping, and staring back, but there was nothing to be seen. He put his hand up, and it came away from his shoulder, bloody.

"Somebody," he muttered softly, "doesn't like me!"

The dark shape of the *Semiramis* loomed not fifty feet away. He climbed the ladder to the dock, then moved warily toward the freighter. As he came up the gangway, a dark shape materialized from beside the hatch. He recognized the half-shaven head of the big Toradjas, one of his trusted crew.

"It's all right, Lyssy," he said, "it's me."

"Something happen astern, *Capitan*.

Somebody—" Lyssy saw Ponga Jim's dripping clothes, and his eyes widened. "Somebody try kill you?"

"That's right." Mayo glanced back at the dock. "Keep your eyes open. Who else is on watch?"

"Big London, he forward, Longboy aft. Sakim, he around somewhere, too."

"Has anyone been here?"

"Yaas, *Capitan*. One man he come say he want to talk to you. He say ver' importan'. He say Gener'l Kernan send him."

"Where is he?" Ponga Jim demanded.

"In your cabin. You say no man come aboard, this man he worry to see you. We lock him in."

Ponga Jim grinned. "Okay. You stay here."

**H**E QUICKLY climbed the ladder to his deck, then fitted his key in the lock of his door. He swung it open—and stopped dead in his tracks. The man sitting in Ponga Jim's favorite chair, facing the door, had been shot above his left eyebrow.

Slowly, Ponga Jim reached behind him and drew the door to. He circled the body, studying it with narrowed eyes. Then he stepped behind the body, and sighted across the dead man's head in line with the wound. The bullet had come through the open port-hole. In line with the port was the corner of the warehouse roof. Whoever had fired the shot had stood on that corner, and made a perfect job.

Ponga Jim went out to the deck and called Lyssy.

"Did you hear a shot?" he demanded.

"No, *Capitan*, nobody shoot!" Lyssy said positively.

That meant one thing to Ponga Jim. A silencer had been used.

"The man up there is dead," he said. "He was shot from that warehouse roof."

Sakim came up, and Ponga Jim hurriedly scratched a note.

"Take this message to Major Arnold

at this address," he instructed. "Give it to no one else. Then return here."

He went back into his cabin and, closing the door, careful not to disturb the position of the body, he searched the murdered man's pockets. He spread everything he found on his desk and studied the collection carefully. There was a key ring with several keys, a billfold, a fountain pen, a gun, some odd change, mostly silver, and a ticket stub indicating that the victim had but recently arrived from Alexandria. Also, there was a magnificent emerald ring, the gem being carved in the form of a scarab.

Turning his attention to the billfold. Ponga Jim found a packet of money amounting to about eighty Egyptian pounds, around four hundred dollars. In one pocket of the billfold was a white card, and on it, in neat handwriting, a name.

#### ZARA HAMMEDAN

After a few minutes thought he pocketed the key ring, the card with the name and the emerald ring. On second thought, he returned the ring to the table, retaining the other things he had chosen.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Too Late!*



AT a sudden rap on the door, Ponga Jim looked up. He opened the door to find Major Arnold, General Kernan and Nathan Demarest awaiting him. They had come promptly in answer to Mayo's note.

Arnold crossed at once to the body, and made a cursory examination.

"Then this man who has been killed never managed to talk to you?" General Kernan asked.

"No," Ponga Jim replied. "I was delayed myself. Someone tried to add me to your list of killings."

Arnold looked up quickly. "I noticed you were wet. Did they shove you in?"

Ponga Jim nodded. He was looking across the room at a mirror.

"Yes. Good attempt, too. But I don't kill very easy."

"What happened?" Demarest asked. "Did you—catch him?"

"No, I killed him. He cut me a little, but not much."

"But you were in the water," Demarest persisted. "How could you kill him?"

"I killed him," Ponga Jim said quietly, "in the water. He got his belly and lungs full of it."

Demarest's eyes narrowed a little, then he glanced at the body. "That man was a half-caste," he said. "But his killers must have taken him for you."

"I don't think so," Ponga Jim said. "I think the killer knew who he was shooting."

"So do I," Kernan said. "This man who was shot came here with a message for you. He came to me first, learned you were here, and said he would talk to no one but you. Had some message for you."

Arnold straightened up. "Had you noticed something, Jim? No identification on this man. Not a thing. We can check back on this ticket stub and the gun, but I'm sure they will give us nothing."

"What about the ring?" Ponga Jim asked.

"Old, isn't it?" Arnold said, "and odd-looking. It might be a clue."

Ponga Jim picked up the ring. "Look at that again, William. Emeralds and rubies were carved into scarabs only for royalty. The emerald itself is big, the ring too heavy for ordinary wear. It's probably a funeral ring, and probably dates back three thousand years. That ring is museum stuff. But I'll bet it didn't come from any museum."

"Why?" General Kernan asked. He examined the ring curiously.

"Such prize archaeological specimens are too well cared for. And if anything as valuable as that were lost, everyone would have heard of it. No, this man, whoever he was, had found a tomb and had been looting it."

"He might have picked it up in some thieves' market," Demarest protested.

"What I'm wondering," Arnold said, "is how all this can tie in with your mysterious battleship? A thief with a stolen ring, or one looted from a tomb could scarcely have anything to do with such a thing."

"That battleship," Ponga Jim suggested, "or even if I was crazy and it was only a submarine or two, must have a base. The first problem, it seems to me, is to locate that base. The fact that the ship is in the Red Sea gives us a chance to keep it here—if we can. My theory is that this dead guy may have known where the base is, and maybe that knowledge ties in with that ring."

**M**AJOR ARNOLD stayed on after the others had gone.

"Go slow, Jim," he advised. "Skelton doesn't approve of civilians interfering in government affairs and he persists in maintaining that you have no right to have an armed ship, that actually you're a pirate."

"Yeah?" Ponga Jim chuckled. Maybe he's right. I'm an American, even though I've spent little time there. My shipping business is in war areas, but I'm not asking America's

protection. I protect myself. But seriously, William, this business has got me going in circles. Why the rush to kill me? Who knows, except you guys, that I saw that warship? Who knows that a ship owner and skipper like myself would ever dream of investigating the thing? Why should this guy with the ring come to me?"

Arnold nodded. "I've thought of that," he said. "Frankly, Jim, other people have, too. Skelton even hinted that you might have sunk that convoy."

"What?" Ponga Jim's face hardened. "Some day that guy's going to make me sore."

"But see his angle. You have guns. There were two destroyers with that convoy, but what would prevent you from giving one of them a salvo at close quarters when they expected nothing of the kind? And then the other?"

"There's something in that," Ponga Jim admitted. "But you and I know it's baloney. And where does this killing me come in? Only one way I can see it. These babies have an espionage system that reaches right to the top here in Egypt. They know about me coming through, they know about my plan to go on."

Arnold was thoughtful. "Jim," he said slowly, "I've got a hunch. You've knocked around a lot. Suppose you were right, and this isn't a Nazi deal? Who or what could it be? My hunch

[Turn page]



is that you know, and somebody knows you know, and is afraid you might talk."

Ponga Jim frowned. "I know? What d'you mean?"

"Suppose that while knocking around—you used to be in Africa—you stumbled across some person or place connected with this. You have forgotten, but someone in this plot hasn't."

Mayo nodded. "Might be something to it. But what?"

"Think it over. In the meanwhile, we'll have this body taken off your hands."

When Arnold had gone Ponga Jim walked out on deck and called Selim and Sakim.

"Listen," he said. "You boys used to be wise to everything that happened in the Red Sea. I want you to go out into the bazaars, anywhere, and I want the gossip. I want to know more about this warship we saw. I want to know about that guy that was killed in my cabin. Above all, I want to know something about a woman named Zara Hammedan!"

The two Afridis stiffened.

"Who, *nakhoda*?" Selim said. "Did you say Zara Hammedan?"

"That's right."

"But, *nakhoda*, we know who she is!" Selim hesitated. Then: "I will tell you, *nakhoda*. This is a secret among Moslems, but you are our protector and friend. There is among Moslems a young movement, a sect of those who are fanatics who would draw together all Moslem countries in a huge empire. These men have chosen Zara Hammedan for their spiritual leader. She is scarcely more than a girl, *nakhoda*, but she is of amazing beauty."

"Who is she? An Arab?"

Selim shrugged. "Perhaps. It is said she is of the family of the Sultan of Kishin, leader of the powerful Mahra tribe whose territory extends along the coast from Museinaa to Damkut."

Slug Brophy came up as the two were leaving.

"Any orders, Skipper? We'll have her empty an hour after daybreak."

"Yeah."

Ponga Jim talked slowly for several minutes, and Slug nodded.

"Can you swing it?" he asked finally.

"Sure." Brophy hitched up his trousers. "This is going to be good...."

**A** FEW minutes after daybreak, Ponga Jim went ashore and headed for Golmar Street. As he disappeared, Brophy stepped out on deck. With him was Big London.

"That's the lay," Slug said briefly. "The Chief's going alone. You follow him, see? But keep that ugly mug of yours out of sight. I got a hunch he's sticking his neck out, and I want you close by if he does. He'd raise the roof if he knew it, so keep your head down."

The giant Negro nodded eagerly, then went ashore. Brophy looked after him, grinning.

"Well, Skipper," he muttered, "if you do get into it, you can use that guy."

For three hours, Ponga Jim was busy. He dropped in various bars, consumed a few drinks, ate breakfast and lounged about. In his white-topped peaked cap with its captain's insignia, his faded khaki suit and woven leather sandals, he was not conspicuous. Only the unusual breadth of his shoulders, and his sun-browned face somehow stood out. The bulge under his left shoulder was barely noticeable.

The streets of Suez were jammed. War had brought prosperity to the port, and the ships that came up from around the Cape of Good Hope were mostly docking here. Hundreds of soldiers were about the streets. Ghurkas, Sikhs, and Punjabis from India, stalwart Australians and New Zealanders, occasional Scotsmen, and a number of R.A.F. flyers. And seamen

from all the seven seas, stronging ashore for a night or a day, then off to sea again. There was a stirring in the bazaars, and rumors were rife of new activity in Libya, of fighting to break out in Irak once more, of German aggression in Turkey.

And the grapevine of the Orient was at work, with stories from all the Near East drifting here. To a man who knew his way around, things were to be learned in the bazaars.

Ponga Jim went on to Port Said, flying over, and later flying back. At four in the afternoon, he presented himself at Skelton's office.

He was admitted at once. Demarest, Kernan, Arnold, Woodbern and Skelton himself were there.

"Glad you dropped in, Mayo," Skelton said abruptly. "I was about to send for you. Our destroyers wirelessed that they could find only wreckage. Two more destroyers coming up from Aden effected a junction with the same report. What have you to say to that?"

"The warship could have hidden," Ponga Jim said quietly. "You would scarcely expect it to wait for you."

"Hidden? In the Red Sea?" Skelton smiled coldly. "Captain Mayo, a warship could not be concealed in the Red Sea. No ship could be."

"No?" Ponga Jim smiled in turn.

"No," Skelton said. "Furthermore, Captain Mayo, I have deemed it wise to order your ship interned until we can investigate further. I am a little curious as to those guns you carry. I also hear you carry a pocket submarine and an amphibian plane. Strange equipment for an honest freighter."

"The spoils of war," Mayo assured him, still smiling. "I captured them, and have found them of use. And I hate to disappoint you, Skelton, but I'm afraid if you expect to interne the *Semiramis* you are a bit late."

"What do you mean?" Skelton snapped.

"The *Semiramis*," Ponga Jim said

softly, "finished discharging shortly after daybreak this morning. She left port immediately!"

"What!"

Skelton was on his feet, his face white with anger. The other men tensed. But out of the corner of his eye, Ponga Jim could see a twinkle in General Kernan's eyes.

"No doubt you'll find the *Semiramis*," Ponga Jim said coolly, "since you say no ship can be concealed in the Red Sea. Good hunting, Skelton!"

He turned and started for the door.

**A** BUZZER sounded, and behind him he heard Skelton lift the phone.

"What?" Skelton shouted. "Both of them?" The telephone dropped back into the cradle. "Gentlemen," Skelton said sharply, "the destroyers sent from this base to investigate Captain Mayo's report have both been sunk. A partial message was received, telling how they had been attacked. Captain Mayo, you are under arrest!"

"Sorry, gentlemen," Mayo said, "but I can't wait!"

He swung the door open and sprang into the hall.

"Stop him!" Skelton roared.

A burly soldier leaped from his position by the wall, grabbing at Mayo with both hands. Ponga Jim grabbed the big man by the wrist and hurled him over his back in a flying mare that sent the big fellow crashing into the opposite wall. Then he was down the hall, out into the street, and with one jump, was into the crowd.

Another soldier rushed from the building and started down the steps close on Ponga Jim's heels. A Herculean Negro, lounging near the door, deftly thrust his foot in the way, and the soldier spilled head over heels into the crowd at the foot of the stone steps.

Rounding a corner, Ponga Jim slipped into a crowded bazaar. He stopped briefly at a stall, and when he left he was wrapped in a long Arab

cloak, or *abba*, and on his head was a head-cloth bound with an aghal. With his dark skin and his black hair he looked like a native.

He walked on, mingling with the people of the bazaar. Twice soldiers passed him, their eyes scanning the bazaar, but none looked at him.

But as Ponga Jim drifted slowly from the bazaar and out into the less crowded streets, a slim, hawk-featured man was close behind. And a little further back, Big London, his mighty muscles concealed by his own *abba*, trailed along, watching with jungle-trained cunning the two men in the crowd ahead.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### *Zara Hammedan*



THE market places of the East teem with gossip, and stories are told over the buying of leather or the selling of fruit, or in the harems.

To hear them, many an Intelligence officer would pay a full year's salary.

During the morning, Ponga Jim had heard much. Now, in his simple disguise and with his easy, natural flow of Arabic, he heard more. A discreet comment or two added to his information.

Several points held his interest. If the Nazis were behind the mysterious killings of the key men who had been murdered here, and if they owned the mystery warship, why had Ambrose Carter been killed, known as he was to favor Hitler? And what had he been doing in Egypt?

Who was the man who had been shot aboard the *Semiramis*? Where had he obtained the scarab ring? Why did he want to talk to Ponga Jim and no one else? And what was his connection with the girl, Zara Hammedan?

And last but not least, what could

Ponga Jim Mayo possibly know that the enemy might fear?

Whatever it was, it had to be something he had known before he left Africa, several years before. There seemed only one answer to that. He would have to go over all his African experience in his mind, recalling each fact, each incident, each person. Somewhere he would find a clue.

In the meanwhile, he would have to avoid the police, and even more, the killers who would be sure to be on his trail. The card that had been found on the dead man, the card bearing the name of Zara Hammedan, was the only good lead Ponga Jim had, and to Zara Hammedan he would go.

He had already learned that she lived in the Ramleh section of Alexandria. So at eight o'clock, moving up through the trees, Ponga Jim looked up at the Moorish palace that was Zara Hammedan's home. There were no windows on the lower floor; just a high, blank wall of stucco. Above that, the second floor projected over the narrow alley on either side of the house, and there were many windows, all brilliantly lighted.

A limousine rolled up to the entrance, and two men in evening dress got out. For an instant the light touched the face of one of them. He was Nathan Demarest!

As other cars began to arrive, Ponga Jim studied the house thoughtfully. Had there been no crowd he would have shed his disguise, approached the house, and sent his own name to the lady. But now—

Keeping under the cypress trees, he worked down along the alley. At one place the branches of a huge tree reached out toward the window opposite it. Ponga Jim caught a branch and swung himself into the tree with the agility of a monkey. Creeping out along the branch, he glanced through the window into a bedroom, obviously a woman's room. At the moment, it was empty.

The window was barred, and the

heavy bars were welded together and set into steel slides in the window casting. Ponga Jim crept farther along the branch, a big one that had been cut off when it touched the house. Balancing himself, he tested the bars. Almost noiselessly, they lifted when he strained.

They wouldn't weigh a bit under eighty pounds, and it was an awkward lift, even though he had often put up more than twice that with one hand. Looking about, he found a fair-sized branch, and cut it off with his seaman's clasp-knife. Then, leaning far out, he worked the set of bars up and propped the stick beneath them.

**I**T WAS quite dark, and in the dim light Ponga Jim could see nothing beneath him. Once, he thought he detected a movement, but when he waited, there was no more movement, no sound. He pushed the window open with his foot and slipped through the window.

Below, in the darkness, the jungle-keen ears of Big London who had been watching Ponga Jim slowly working the bars up, had heard a soft step. He faded into the brush as softly as a big cat. A man slid slowly from the dark, glanced around, trying to place the Negro, then slid a knife from his sleeve. And as Ponga Jim leaned far out toward the window, he drew the knife back to throw.

A huge black hand closed around his throat, and he was fairly jerked from his feet. Struggling, he tried to use the knife, but it was plucked from his nerveless fingers by the big black. Before the man knew what was happening, he was neatly trussed hand and foot, then gagged. Dimly, he saw a huge form bending above him, making a threatening motion with the knife. Frightened, the would-be killer was silent.

Ponga Jim gently closed the window behind him and glanced around. There was a faint perfume in the room. He crossed to the dressing table,

and slid open a drawer. Inside were some letters. He had started to glance over them when a voice in the hall startled him. Instantly, he dropped the packet into the drawer, stepped quickly across the room and into a closet.

The door opened, and a woman came in. Or rather a girl, followed by a maid. Her hair was black, and her eyes were long, large, and slightly oblique. Her white evening gown fitted her like a dream, and revealed rather than concealed her slender, curved figure.

She wore a simple jade necklace that Ponga Jim could see was very old. Standing in the darkness he watched through the crack of the closet door, fearful that the maid might come to the closet.

Zara Hammedan, for it was obviously she, glanced up once, straight at the door behind which he stood. Then the maid started across the room toward him.

"No, Miriam," Zara said suddenly, "just leave the things. I'll take care of them. You may go now. If anyone asks for me, tell them I'll be down shortly."

The maid stepped from the room and drew the door closed. Zara touched her hair lightly, then put her hand in a drawer and lifted a small, but businesslike automatic. Then she looked at the closet door.

"You may come out now," she said evenly, "but be careful! You should clean the sand from your shoes."

Ponga Jim Mayo pushed the door open and stepped out, closing it behind him.

"You," he said, smiling, "are a smart girl."

"Who are you?" she demanded. Her face showed no emotion, but he was struck again by its vivid beauty.

"I am a man who found another man murdered in his cabin," Ponga Jim said quietly, "and that man had your name written on a card that was in his pocket. So I came to you."

"You choose an odd way of present-

ing yourself," Zara said. "Who was this man?"

"I do not know," Jim said. "He came to see me, and in his pocket was a ring with an emerald scarab."

**S**HE caught her breath.

"When did this happen?"

"Shortly after midnight. The man was shot by someone using a silencer, from across the street. So far the police know nothing about the murder. Or about the ring, or your name."

"Why did I not know of this?" she asked. "It seems—"

"One of your present guests knows," Ponga Jim said. "Nathan Demarest."

"He?" She stared at him wide-eyed. "But who are you?"

He smiled. "I'm Ponga Jim Mayo," he said.

"Oh!" she rose. "I have heard of you. You came here then, to learn about the murdered man?"

"Partly." He sat down and took off the head-cloth. "The rest is to find what he wanted to tell me, where he got that ring, and what you know about a certain warship now in the Red Sea. Also, what there is to this Moslem movement you're heading."

She smiled at him. "What makes you think all of these questions have anything to do with me?"

"I know they have," he said. "And I've got to know the answers, because somebody's trying to kill me. I was attacked last night, shoved in the harbor by a killer."

"You?" she exclaimed. "Was it a man with a scar across his nose?"

"Sure," Ponga Jim said. "That's him." He took a cigarette from a sandalwood box and lit it. Then he handed it to her. "A friend of yours?"

"No!" The loathing in her voice was plain. "But the man was a pearl diver from Koweit. I don't see how—"

"How I got away? I've done some diving myself, lady, and a lot of fighting. Now give. What's this all about?"

"I can't tell you," Zara said. "Only—if you want to live, take your ship

and leave Egypt, and don't ever come back!"

"That's not hospitality," he said, grinning, "especially from a beautiful girl. No, I'm not leaving. I've been warned before, and threatened before. I've as healthy a respect for my own hide as the next man, but never have found you could dodge trouble by running. My way is to meet it half-way. Now somebody wants my hide. I'd like to see the guy. I'd like to see what he wants and if he knows how to get it."

"He does. And I'll tell you nothing, but this—the dead man was Rudolf Burne, and you are marked for death because of three things. You beat a man playing poker once who never was beaten before or since, you know where the emerald ring came from, and where the warship is!"

"I do?" Ponga Jim stared. "But—"

"You'll have to go now!" Zara said suddenly, her eyes wide. "Quick! There's someone coming!"

He hurried to the window. She stood behind him, biting her lip. Suddenly he realized she was trembling with fear.

"Go!" she insisted. "Quickly!"

"Sure." He slid open the window and put a leg over the sill. "But never let it be said that Jim Mayo failed to say good-by." Slipping one arm around Zara's waist, he kissed her before she could draw back. "Good-night," said Ponga Jim. "I'll be seeing you!"

As the steel grate slid into place, he heard the door open, then he was back in the foliage of the tree, and in a matter of seconds had slid to the ground.

"Now," he told himself, "I'll—"

At a movement behind him he whirled, but something crashed down on his head with stunning force. There was an instant of blinding pain when he struggled to fight back the wave of darkness sweeping over him, then another blow, and he plunged forward into a limitless void.

## CHAPTER V

*In a Tomb*

WHEN Ponga Jim's eyes opened he was lying on his back in almost total darkness. A thin ray of light from a crack overhead tried feebly to penetrate the gloom. He tried to sit up, only to find he was bound hand

and foot and very securely. His head throbbed with agony, and the tightly bound ropes made his hands numb. After an instant of futile effort, he lay still, letting his eyes rove the darkness. The place had rock walls, he could see—one wall at least. There seemed to be some kind of inscriptions or paintings on the wall, but he couldn't make them out.

The air was dry, and when he stirred a powdery dust lifted from the floor.

Lying in the darkness he tried to assemble his thoughts. Most of all there hammered at his brain the insistent reminder that he, himself, knew the answers to the puzzling questions that had brought him to this situation. Zara had told him that he knew the man behind the scenes, where the ship was, and where the ring had come from.

But there was something else—a memory he couldn't place, a sensation of lying in the bottom of a boat and hearing voices. Now he slowly pieced together that memory, scowling with effort to force the thought back to consciousness. In that swaying darkness he half remembered, with spray on his face and damp boards against his back, he seemed to have heard a guttural voice saying in triumph:

"That will be the biggest convoy of all! Forty ships, and they are helpless before the *Khamsin*."

Then another voice that had muttered, "And only two days to wait!"

Ponga Jim Mayo lay still, his head

throbbing. For the first time in a life of fierce brawls, barroom brannigans, gun fights, and war on land and sea, he was helpless. Not only was he imprisoned somewhere far from civilization, he was sure, but he was bound so tightly that even to wriggle seemed impossible. The feeling came over him that he was not just imprisoned. He had been carried here to die.

His mind sorted out his memories. The warship was in the Red Sea. Zara had told him that something in his own past, something he had forgotten but another remembered, linked him with the base of the warship.

Carefully, trying to neglect nothing, he tried to recall that long, narrow, reef-strewn sea of milky, sickly water. He remembered the sand storms sweeping across the sea from the desert, the days of endless calm and impossible heat when the thermometer soared past one hundred and thirty degrees.

Rocky islets and endless, jagged coral teeth ready to tear the bottom from a ship, sandy shores where desert tribesmen lurked, ready to raid and pillage any helpless ship, pirates now as they had been in ages ago in Solomon's time.

And along those mountainous, volcanic shores where no rain fell, were ruins. Ruins of the heyday of Mohammed, of Solomon, of the Pharoahs. Ruins whose names and origins were lost in the mists of antiquity. No like area in all the world has so many ruined cities as the shores of the Red Sea, and the edge of Arabia where it faces the Indian Ocean.

Even in Mokha, once the center of the coffee trade, in 1824 a city of twenty thousand inhabitants with a shifting population that made it much larger, only two or three hundred Somalis, Arabs and Jews now lived in ruined houses of stone, crawling like animals in rags from their lairs, cowardly and abject, but ready to fight like demons if need be. Mokha, now only a memory with its streets heaped

with débris, its stone piers crumbling into the stagnant, soupy sea.

Yet, somewhere along the shores of the Red Sea was a base. A base that must be well-equipped, fitted for at least minor repairs, with tanks filled with water and fuel oil. But where?

His memory searched around Hanish Island, around many a *Ghubbet* and *khor*, down the Masira Channel and past Ras Markaz, across the dreaded Rakka shoals and up to Jiddah town where the Tomb of Eve with its wide, white dome stands among the old windmills.

Somewhere in that heat, sand, and desolate emptiness was the base for that battleship of mystery he had seen.

Now Europe, Asia and even America were at war, and in the Near East the bazaars were rife with whispers of intrigue. Stories of impending rebellion, of the gathering desert tribes, of restlessness along the Ti-hama, of gatherings in the Druse hills. And then out of the night—murder.

Hard-bitten old General McKnight, who knew the East as few men did—murdered. Poisoned with his own sherry. And Norfolk, shrewd criminal investigator, stabbed suddenly on a dark street. One by one the men who could fight this new evil, this strange, growing power, one by one they were dying, murdered by unseen hands at the direction of a man who sat far behind the scenes pulling the strings upon which puppets moved to kill.

Ponga Jim stirred restlessly. That was the horror of it, to know that he knew the clue, that somewhere down the chaotic background of his past was the knowledge that could end all this killing here.

Suddenly, he stiffened. There had been a movement, a sly, slithering sound. And for the first time, he became conscious of a peculiar odor in the place. His eyes had gradually grown accustomed to the dim light, and now, with a skin-crawling horror, he saw!

On a heap of broken stone and piled earthen jars was a huge snake, lifting his ugly flat head and looking toward him! His throat constricting with terror, Ponga Jim's eyes roved again. And now that he could distinguish things better, and in the dim vagueness could see grotesque figures, of carts, animals, workmen painted on the walls, he knew he was in a tomb! He was lying where the sarcophagus once had lain, on a stone table probably three or four feet above the floor.

TURNING his head, he could see the dim outlines of great coils, more snakes. And still more.

He looked up, cold sweat breaking out on his forehead, and it dawned upon him what had been done. Above, a loosely fitted stone slab had been moved back, and his body had been lowered into this old tomb. Soon he would fall off the table to the floor, and the snakes would bite. Or he would die of thirst, or of starvation.

Ponga Jim felt with his feet toward the edge of the stone table. He got his ankles over, and a thrill went through him as what he had hoped proved true. The edge of the stone slab on which he lay was clean-cut, sharp!

Hooking his ankles over the edge, he began to saw. It would take a long time, but it would have to be. A snake moved, rearing his head to stare, but he worked on as sweat soaked his clothing.

It seemed that hours passed, but still he worked, on, and on. Above him, the light grew dim and darkness closed down.

Suddenly, dust spilled in his face, and above him he heard a grating as of stone on stone. He looked up, and above him was a square of sky and stars, blotted out suddenly by an enormous shape.

"Cap'n Jim?" The voice was husky with effort. "You down there, Cap'n?"

"You're right I am!" Ponga Jim's voice was hoarse with relief. "Watch



it! I'm tied hand and foot, an' this place is crawling with snakes. Get a line an' rig a hook on it."

"Cap'n, they ain't no mo' line up here than there's nothin'! This here place is nothin' but rock an' sand. Ain't no fit place for no snake even."

"Wait!"

In desperation, Ponga Jim hacked viciously at the edge of the slab, and suddenly felt the weakened strands give. He hacked again, kicking downward against the stone edge, sawing, jerking against the corner.

The snakes were stirring restlessly now. He knew what would happen if

one struck him. Within an instant he would be bitten a hundred times. Snakes, like rats and men, can be gang fighters.

But the rope fell loose.

**H**E CRAWLED to his feet, staggered, and almost toppled from the table into the crawling mass below.

Ponga Jim's hands were bound, but even if they had not been it was a good ten feet to the hole above.

"London," he called, "scout around an' find something to haul me out of here or I'll start knotting these snakes

together. If I do I swear I'll toss you the hot end to hold!"

"Don't you be doin' that!" Big London said hastily. "I'll see what I can fin'."

Ponga Jim bent over, working his slender hips between the circle of his arms and bound wrists. Once he had them down over his hips he stepped back through the circle, and straightened up, his arms in front of him. Then he began working at the knot with his teeth. It was a matter of minutes until the knots were untied.

Shaking the ropes loose, he gathered up the pieces. He had about eight feet of rope; a bit less when he had knotted the two together with a sheet bend.

There was sound above him.

"Cap'n—Big London's voice was worried—"I reckon you goin' to have to start workin' on them snakes. They ain't nothing up here like no rope."

"Lie down!" Ponga Jim said, "and catch this rope! I'll toss it up, you take a good hold, and then I'm climbing. And you better not let go!"

"You jus' leave it to Lon'on, Cap'n," the Negro assured him. "I'll not let go!"

Big London caught the rope deftly. Then Ponga Jim went up, hand over hand. When he reached Big London's hands, he grabbed the big Negro's wrist. London let go the rope and caught him. In a few seconds he was standing in the open air.

"Thanks, pal!" Ponga Jim said fervently. "I've been in some spots, but that one—"

"Cap'n," Big London said, "we better be goin'. This is clean across the Gulf of Suez an' way down the coast. They spent the bes' part of the night an' morning comin' down here."

Ponga Jim looked around. It was bright moonlight.

"Is there a high cliff right over there?" He pointed toward the southeast. "One that drops off into the water? And is there a Black Hill right over there?"

"Sure is, Cap'n," Big London said.

"I took me that Black Hill for a landmark. I smuggled myself away on their boat, hopin' they'd leave one man alone so I could take over, but they never. Then I waited hid out till they took you ashore. I wanted to foller, but they got clean away with three men with guns still on the boat. I had to slip over into the water when they started agin, swim ashore, then trail you up here."

"You did a good job." Ponga Jim chuckled. "The joke is on them. This place is the Ras Muhammed, the tip of Sinai Peninsula, and right over there, not three miles from here, in one of the neatest little bays in this area, is the *Semiramis*!"

An hour and a little more passed before they reached the shore of the little inlet surrounded by high cliffs. At a cleft in the rock they made their way down to a beach of black sand and decomposed coral. The freighter was anchored, a dark blotch, not a hundred yards off shore. At Ponga Jim's shout, a boat was hastily lowered.

No sooner had Ponga Jim reached the freighter than he called Brophy.

"Slug," he said, "get Number Five open and break out that amphibian. I want her tuned and ready to take off by daybreak. This is going to be quick work."

He walked into the cabin, tossed off his clothes, and fell into his bunk. In seconds he was sound asleep.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Mystery Leader*



FOUR men and a woman sat in the spacious living room of Zara Hammedan's Ramleh residence. Zara's face was composed, and only her eyes showed a hint of the strain she was undergoing.

One of the men stood up. He was

well over six feet, broad-shouldered, and moved with the ease of a big cat. There was a great deal of the cat about him—in his eyes, in the movements of his hands. His hair was black, but white at the temples, and his eyes were large and intensely black. His face was swarthy, and his arched eyebrows heavy. There was about him something that spoke of a sense of power, of command, and in every word, every gesture was an utter ruthlessness.

"You see, gentlemen?" he said lightly. "Our plans move swiftly. There was a momentary danger, but Captain Mayo has been taken care of. He was dropped into the Tomb of the Snakes this morning. By this time he has been dead for hours. By tomorrow noon the convoy will be well into the Red Sea. It carries fifty thousand soldiers, many planes, much petrol and much ammunition. By tomorrow at dark that convoy will be completely destroyed. As always, there will be no survivors.

"And tomorrow night?" General Kernan and Major Arnold will be shot down. Within an hour a reign of terror will begin in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said, Suez, Beirut, Damascus, Bagdad, and Aleppo. By tomorrow night at midnight, the British will be leaderless in the Near East. Rebellion will break out." The man paused. "Then we will take over."

"I do not like it." The man who spoke was slender, bald, and his small eyes were shrewd. "It is not practical. And that Ponga Jim was disposed of in too theatrical a manner. He should have been shot. I would never leave such a man alive."

"The man is just a man." The imperious words of the tall man were smooth, cold. "One would think, *Herr Heitn*, that you thought him supernatural."

Heitn smiled thinly. "I know this man," he said shortly. "Did I not use every means to dispose of him? Did he not kill my brother? Did he not

handle Count Kull like he was a child?"

"Strength is not enough," the tall man said. "It takes brains!"

"You got something there, Chief," one of the other men said. His jaw was heavy, his nose flat. He looked like a good heavyweight boxer. "But I been hearin' about this guy Mayo. He's a tough cookie."

"But I know how to handle 'tough cookies', Mullens," the tall man assured. "You have only to handle your end. You have your men ready?"

"You bet," Mullens said. "I got four of the best rodmen that ever slung a heater. All of 'em wit' tommy guns. We'll mow your pals Kernan an' Arnold down like they were dummies."

"Then we're all ready. You're sure about the time, Demarest?"

"Yes," said Demarest. "The time is right. Everything will move perfectly. The destruction of this convoy, the fourth consecutive convoy to be totally destroyed, will wreck the troops' morale. A whispering campaign has begun. Kernan cannot be replaced. He knows the East too well."

**H**EITN was watching the tall man steadily, his eyes curious.

"I don't understand your stake in this, Theron," he said abruptly. "What is it you want? You are not German. You are not just an adventurer. I do not understand."

"No reason why you should, *Herr Heitn*," the man called Theron snapped. "You have a task to do. You will do it. What you think or do not think is of no interest to me if your task is well done."

Zara arose and excused herself. Theron's eyes followed her as she left the room. They were cold, curious.

"What of her?" Demarest asked. "You are sure of her?"

"I will be responsible for her, Demarest. She has too much power among the Arabs not to be of value to us. But she must be kept with us always."

The group broke up. Heitn was first to leave. He took his hat and started for the door, then glanced swiftly around, and with surprising speed darted up the stairs toward Zara's room. There he tapped lightly on the door.

It opened at once, and before Zara could speak, Heitn slipped into the room. He looked at the girl narrowly.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

The German looked down at the small automatic in her hand.

"You will not need that *Fraulein*," he said gently. "What I want is of interest to us both. I want to know about *him*." He pointed downward. "Can we trust him? What does he want? Who is he?"

Zara's face paled. She glanced toward the door. It was locked. She crossed to the window, started to close it, then caught her breath. The steel bars were gone!

But when she turned, her face was composed.

"I know no more than you, *Herr Heitn*," she said calmly, "except he seems to have unlimited funds. Also, he is ambitious."

Heitn nodded. "Ah!" he said seriously. "That is what I have seen, *Fraulein*. He is ambitious. Too ambitious. And he has power, too much power. Sometimes"—he shook his head worriedly—"I think he is beyond us all, that man. He is not a Nazi, yet he is too strong with the Party for me, who am a Nazi."

"But what could he do?" Zara protested.

"Do? A strong man with money, ambition, and courage—what can he not do in such times as these? Nations are rising and falling, men are discouraged, afraid. They will look everywhere for shelter. The weak admire the strong, and that one, he is strong. He is cruel. I admit it, *Fraulein*. I am afraid of him!"

Casually Zara Hammedan lighted a cigarette. Her eyes strayed toward the closet door, now closed. She frowned

a little. The bars from the window had been slid up out of sight again, and that could mean but one thing. Ponga Jim Mayo was somewhere in the house.

She looked at the German shrewdly. "Herr Heitn, your government does not appeal to me, you know that. But I would even prefer the dictatorship of Nazi Germany to what would follow the success of these schemes in the Near East! I do not know more about that man than you do, but I do know that Captain Mayo knew, or knows, something that he does not wish anyone to know."

"And Mayo is dead," Heitn said slowly.

"Perhaps." Zara flicked the ash from her cigarette. "You had better go, *Herr Heitn*. It grows late."

The Nazi turned to the door, then glanced around.

"I go, but I have a plan to make our friend below be a bit more reasonable. He has been too ambitious. But there are ways—" He smiled. "Guten Abend, *Fraulein*!"

**A**S HEITN walked swiftly down the hall he glanced over the stairs, but no one was in sight. With a quick smile, Heitn went down the carpeted stairs. He had reached the door when a voice froze him in his tracks. Something in the low, even tone sent a chill up his spine. He turned slowly.

Theron stood in the shadow near the door from the wide living room. The light fell across his face. There was something regal in his appearance. In his right hand, he held a German Luger.

"I thought you left us, *Herr Heitn*?" he said coldly. "I do not like spies!"

"Spies?" Heitn shrugged. "Come, come, Theron! That is hardly the term. I went up to see Miss Hammedan about—"

"But searched my room in the meantime, is that it? Give me that blue-

print, *Herr Heitn*. Give it to me, at once!"

"Blueprint?" the Nazi was puzzled. "I don't understand."

Above in the darkness, Zara slipped from her room and looked down. In her hand was an automatic. She hesitated, then lifted it slowly.

"Don't!"

A hand closed over her wrist, and the voice that spoke to her was low. Demarest stepped up beside her.

"Not now," he said. "Without him, nothing would work. He holds all the strings. The whole plot would be useless and we would be exposed."

In the silence they could hear the words that were being spoken at the front door.

"All right, *Herr Heitn*," Theron was saying. "It does not matter. But if the blueprint were to leave this house, it would matter. None can enter or leave, however, unless I know. You have hidden it here, or have it on you. I do not need it—nor you!"

The sound of the automatic was flat and ugly in the dim hallway. Heitn's face went sick, and the man stepped back, two short steps. Then he sat down, abruptly, with a thin trickle of blood coming from the hole over his heart.

Her face deathly pale, Zara Hammedan turned abruptly and went to her room. Nathan Demarest glanced after her, then shrugged, and returned to his own room.

Zara closed the door, then turned. In the dim light the man sitting on the bed was plainly visible. His peaked cap lay on the bed beside him, and he still wore the faded khaki suit and woven leather sandals. She could see the butt of his automatic under the edge of his coat.

"You—you must go quickly!" she protested. "He killed *Herr Heitn*. He will stop at nothing now!"

"Heitn here?" Ponga Jim lifted an eyebrow. "What I want to know is—who's he?"

"I mean Theron," she whispered.

"He will be coming up, too, wanting to know what Heitn said to me. Go—quickly!"

Ponga Jim's eyes were bright.

"Theron! Why didn't I—" He stepped to the window, put a foot over the sill and reached for the thick branch. "So long, Beautiful. Be seeing you!"

## CHAPTER VII

### *Ponga Jim Takes a Chance*



PONGA JIM had reached the ground, and was starting to slip back into the trees when he saw them. Four men closing in on him.

He knew what that meant, and he didn't hesitate. He jumped the nearest one, hooking a left short and hard to the man's head. It hit with a *plop*, and the man's head flew back. He dropped like a sack of meal.

A shot clipped by his head, and Ponga Jim dropped into a crouch as his own gun came out. The big automatic roared. Once—twice—three times.

Two men dropped, a third screamed shrilly and staggered back into the building. Holding his left shoulder, Ponga Jim ran. He dodged through the trees with bullets clipping the leaves about him, ducked into an alley, then crossed into another street. A car was waiting with the motor running. He jumped in.

"Move!" he said, and Sakim let the car into gear and stepped on the gas.

Ponga Jim glanced at his watch. It was three A.M. At noon the convoy would be attacked, and he had until then, and until then only. It was going to be nip and tuck if he made it.

He felt sick. Fifty thousand soldiers coming up the Red Sea toward Suez, fifty thousand Anzacs to strengthen the Army of the Nile. He knew the plot now. What he had overheard, and

what he had found in his ransacking of Theron's room had told him the whole story.

Native mobs running riot in the streets, men dying by the thousand—Kernan, Arnold, all of them.

The car slowed up as it neared the American Export Line's office on the Rue Fouad. A man stepped from the shadows, and the car whined to a halt. Major Arnold hit the running board with a jump.

"Jim! What's happened?" Arnold's face was tense. "When Selim found me he said all calamity was to break loose today. What do you know?"

As the car raced across town, Ponga Jim told his story quickly and concisely.

"Ptolemais Theron is the man behind it all," he said. "He's a bad one, William! I've known of him for years. He and I played poker once with two other men in the place of *Mahr-el-din* in the *Kasbah*. Ring Wallace was there, and Ski Jorgenson. Theron had just sidestepped a term on the breakwater for illicit diamond buying and was working on a deal to sell a lot of World War rifles to the Riffs. We were talking of the Red Sea, and Ski—"

Ponga Jim stopped short, and his face went blank.

"By heaven, William, I've got it!"

"Got what?" Arnold's face was tight, stiff.

"William"—Ponga Jim's voice was low with emotion—"Ski Jorgenson had been working a salvage job in the Gulf of Akaba, near Tiran Island. He told us of finding some huge caverns under the cliffs of the islands—one room five hundred yards long, with a dozen chambers opening off from it, and water in that main chamber. He told us about what a swell smuggler's hang-out it would be. And the entrance is deep. A ship could come and go—if it had no masts!"

"You mean that's the base of that mystery battle-wagon?" Arnold's face lit up. "By the Lord Harry, if it is

we'll blast the place in on them!"

"That's the base. Theron wanted me killed because I knew too much. When Ski told about the caverns he also told some stuff about the ancient tombs at Adulis, and the chances are Theron's been robbing them for the gold to put this deal over. That would be where Rudolf Burne got the emerald ring he had. Probably he was in on the deal, got cold feet, and came to me because he knew I wouldn't turn him over to the police. But he was shot before he could talk."

THE car slid to a halt, and Arnold dropped out.

"Don't worry about us," he said drily. "We'll be all set."

"Wait!" Ponga Jim put a hand on Arnold's arm. "Don't say a thing about yourselves—I mean you and General Kernan. I've already arranged for that. I'm going to have Selim, Sakim, Big London and Longboy standing by. They'll get the men who'll be sent to kill you.

"Don't trust anyone. Somebody high up is in this, somebody close to you." He paused. "Oh, yes! Remember Carter? He built the *Kham-sin*. Built the plant for it for the Nazis."

"Okay." Arnold smiled suddenly, and held out his hand. "I don't know what you've got up your sleeve, but good luck. And in case something slips up—it's been a grand fight!"

Ponga Jim grinned. "Listen, pal. Just to keep the record straight. Keep Zara Hamedan under cover. She means well, and—"

"Who?" William grabbed Ponga Jim's arm. "Why, you didn't mention her! Where did you—"

"Shh!" Mayo said, grinning. "It's late, William, and you'll wake up the neighbors. Zara? Oh, we're just like that!" He held up two fingers. "A honey, isn't she?"

Selim stepped on the gas.

"I hope you get shot!" Arnold yelled after him. . .

Tiran Island in the Gulf of Aqaba is six and a half miles long, and in the south part is about five miles wide. Chisholm Point is steep and cliffy, but Johnson Point, the northwest tip of the island, is low and flat, of sand and dead coral. South of the point, two flat, sandy beaches afford good landing, but the coast elsewhere consists of undercut coral cliffs.

It lacked but a little of daylight when Ponga Jim Mayo stepped ashore on one of those sandy beaches. Slug Brophy scowled at him in the vague light.

"I don't like it, Skipper. I don't like shooting at no ship when you're aboard it. An' if they catch you they'll fill you so full of lead you'll sink clean through to China."

"Forget it," said Mayo. "I've got my job to do—you've got yours. Have the boats and life-rafts ready, see? We've got one chance in a million that the *Semiramis* will come out of this, but a chance. All I'm figuring on is crippling the *Khamsin*—that's the name of that mystery battleship—so she can't move fast. Then maybe she can be kept busy until the convoy escapes. Have the sub over right away. Jeff and Hifty from the engine room can handle it."

The boat shoved off into the darkness, and Ponga Jim climbed the gradually shelving beach. He paused there, looking over the island. Sand, decomposed coral, and rock, with here and there some grass. He was going on a memory of what Ski Jorgenson had said several years before, that there was an opening of the cave to the island itself, aside from the huge mouth that opened into the Gulf.

He found it by sheer good luck, after he had looked for an hour. It was already daylight when he saw the small hole Ski had mentioned. Surprisingly, there was no one near it. He slid through, and found himself in a passage where he could stand erect. He hurried, hesitated at a branching passage, then chose the larger. It

opened into the huge cavern so suddenly that he almost walked right out into the open.

Even so, he stopped in his tracks, staring. He stood in the darkness at one side of a huge cavern, its domed roof lost in the shadows overhead. But what held his gaze was the warship.

**I**T WAS at least five hundred feet long, painted black, but glistening with metallic luster. The hull seemed to be built like that of any battleship, but above deck the ship was covered with a tortoise shell covering. There were two turrets forward, and one aft, each looking much like slightly less than half a ball where the rounded surface lifted above the shell. The turrets, obviously, could turn to cover any point from dead ahead to a complete right angle on either side.

Between, in three tiers, like guns in a fort, were smaller guns. Nowhere on the ship was there any exposed deck, any open space. The ship was completely covered with a steel housing from stem to stern.

There were lights around the ship, and men working. Ponga Jim could hear the clangor of metal, could see a great moving crane, and obviously the branch caverns were fitted with shops for the building and upkeep of ships.

Keeping in the shadows, Ponga Jim worked his way to a place where the cavern narrowed. His plan was to get aboard and keep the quarter-pint of nitroglycerine he had intact—which meant keeping himself intact.

Dozens of men were working and sweating. Armed guards patrolled the area near the ship, and at any moment Ponga Jim knew he might be seen. Warily, he dodged behind a pile of oil drums, waiting.

The German who came around the corner of the pile came without any warning, and Ponga Jim looked up to see the man staring at him. He saw the man's eyes widen, saw his mouth open, then Ponga Jim took a chance and smashed a right hand into the

man's belly. If the fellow knocked him down with that nitro in his pocket—

The big German's breath was knocked out of him, but he swung a wicked punch while trying to yell. And somehow, he got out a knife. Mayo ducked the punch, and smashed both hands into the man's wind, then the knife came down in a vicious stabbing cut. Ponga Jim started to duck, but the knife struck him, and he felt the blade bury itself in his side. He grabbed the man's wrist and tore it loose, then smashed his fist into the German's throat, smashed and smashed again.

Fiercely, in darkness and silence, their breath coming in great gasps, the two fought. A terrific punch rocked Ponga Jim's head, and that smoky taste when rocked by a bad one came into his mouth. Then he smashed another punch to the Nazi's windpipe, and hit him hard across the Adam's apple with the edge of his hand. The German went down, and Ponga Jim bent over him, slugging him again.

There was no choice. Even now if the man were found, they would search and Ponga Jim would die. And not only he would die, but fifty thousand soldiers would die, men would die in Alexandria, Cairo, and Port Said. For the news of the attacked convoy was to be the signal for the beginning of the slaughter. Innocent people would die, and brave men. Worse, a tyrant as evil as Hitler would come to power here in the Near East, a killer as ruthless as a shark of the sea, as remorseless as a slinking tiger.

The Nazi sank at Ponga Jim's feet. Behind the piled drums as they were, they had remained unseen. He picked the big German up and felt a white-hot streak of agony along his side.

Remembering a huge crack in the cavern floor back about fifty feet, he carried the man over to it and dropped him in. He did not hear the body strike bottom.

"Sorry, pal," he muttered, "but this is war. It was you or them."

Creeping back, he studied the ship. There was no activity in front of him. That meant a chance. He walked out of the shadow and calmly went up the gangway into the ship. A man glanced up, but at the distance Ponga Jim must have looked like any other officer, for the man went on with his work.

Ponga Jim found himself in an electrically lighted tunnel. He could see the amazingly thick steel of the ship's hull as he went forward, walking fast. He passed several doors until he got well forward, then went into a storeroom.

He found a place secure from observation, slipped off his coat and, taking a deep breath, drew the knife from the wound. It had gone into the muscle back of his ribs from front to back. He plugged the wound, then relaxed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Convoy is Safe*



IT WAS the throb of engines that awakened Ponga Jim. Dimly he was conscious they had been going for some time. By the feel of the ship he knew they were in open water.

Timing was important. The convoy's attempted destruction would begin it. Ponga Jim rolled back the sacks and stepped out into the storeroom. He glanced at his wrist-watch. It was early yet.

He went to the port, and glanced out. The sea was calm, only white around the coral. The sun was hot, and the air clear. Only the dancing heat waves over the rocky shore.

He looked again, and his hands gripped the rim of the port. He felt his heart give a great leap. They

were nearing Gordon Reef in the Strait of Tiran! He saw the small, iron ship plainly visible on the rocks of the reef, the wreck had been there so long it was hardly noticed any more.

But today it meant more. Today, if all went well, a pocket submarine of a hundred tons would be lying there, waiting. The submarine he had captured in the Affair of the Well on Halmahera, or Jilolo.

He was watching, yet even then he could just barely see the ripple of foam when the sub's periscope lifted. In his ears he could hear words as though he were there himself. He could hear Jeff speaking to his one-man crew: "Fire one!" Then, after a few seconds, "Fire two!"

Ponga Jim saw the white streak of the submarine, heard someone sing out above, then he saw the second streak. The big warship was jarred with a terrific explosion, then a second or two later, with a second. A shell crashed in the water only dozens of feet from the tiny sub. But the periscope was gone now.

Ponga Jim gripped his hands until the fingernails bit into his palms. How much damage had been done? Would Jeff and Hifty get away? Thank God, the warship had no destroyer screen to pursue and drop depth bombs.

There was a shouting forward, and he could feel the ship slowing down. He set his jaw. Now it was up to him, now he would do what he came for, and end this scourge of the sea, once and for all.

He found a uniform in the pile of junk in the storeroom, and crawled into it. Then he stepped out into the passage again.

No one seemed to notice him. Men were running and shouting in the steel tunnel. He joined those hurrying men. He gathered that the first torpedo had hit right where he had wanted it to. From the stolen blueprint, which covered a section of the

bow, he had known the extreme bow and stern of the warship were but thinly armored. Elsewhere twenty inches of steel protected the waterline. The second fish had wasted itself against that steel bulwark.

As he dashed forward, a man passed him, and Ponga Jim saw a startled look come into the man's face. The fellow stopped, and Ponga Jim ducked into the passage leading down. A moment later he heard a man yelling, and swore viciously. To be discovered now!

At a breakneck pace he went down the steel ladder. Water was pouring in through the side into one of the blisters below. Into two of them. He heard a petty officer assuring another that the damage was localized, that the *Khamsin* would be slowed a little, but was in no danger of sinking.

Above them, Ponga Jim heard a shouted order. He ducked toward a steel door in the bulkhead. The petty officer shouted at him in German, but he plunged through. Then he stopped and placed the bottle of nitroglycerine against the steel bulkhead.

**T**HE door swung open again, and Ponga Jim flattened against the bulkhead. Men dashed through. On impulse, Ponga Jim stooped, caught up the bottle and sprang back through the door, then ran for the ladder. A man shouted, and grabbed at him, but he swung viciously, and knocked the man sprawling into a corner. Another man leaped at him with a spanner, and Ponga Jim scrambled up the ladder, then wheeled and hurled the bottle into the corner near the damaged side of the ship!

A terrific blast of white flame, shot through with crimson. Ponga Jim felt himself seized as though by a giant hand and hurled against the wall. He went down with a jangle of bells in his head, and above him he could hear the roar of guns, the sound of shells bursting, and a fearful roaring in his head. . . .

Ponga Jim fought back to consciousness to find himself lying on some burst sacks. Struggling to get to his knees, he realized the deck was canted forward.

There was blood all over him. He turned, and sickened at the sight that met his eyes. The deck was covered with blood, and a half dozen men lay around him, their bodies torn and bloody. He crawled to the wall, pulled himself up, and glanced down into the yawning chasm where he had thrown the nitro.

The compartment was full of water, and it was still rising, slowly, but surely. He started aft, feeling his way along the steel tunnel in the dark.

His head throbbed, and something was wrong with one of his legs. He had an awful feeling that part of it was gone, but he struggled along, conscious of a steady burning in his side.

The world was full of thunder, and he could hear the heavy crash of the mighty eighteen-inch guns above him. He was thankful he had stuffed his ears with cotton before starting this. He had known there would be a battle. But were they shelling the convoy? He fought his way to a port, and wiping the blood from his eyes, stared out.

In a kind of madness he saw, across a world of smoke and flame, the ugly stern of the old *Semiramis*. Her rusty sides were scarred with red lead, but the three 5.9s that were aft were firing steadily.

With a stretch of coral reef between the *Semiramis* and the warship, and the freighter itself almost out of sight in the deep, high-walled inlet where it had been concealed, she presented a small target, and one that called for careful firing. It was too close for the big guns, and in an awkward position for the smaller guns. Gunner Millan, he saw, was doing just what he had been told to do. All three of the 5.9s were aimed at one spot on the bow of the *Khamsin*, and were pounding away remorselessly.

But the *Khamsin* was not staying to fight. The convoy was still to be attacked and, crippled though the mystery battle-wagon was, she had only to get out into the sea to bring those big eighteen-inch guns to bear on that convoy. She was injured, but proceeding as scheduled.

Clinging to the port, Ponga Jim heard an ominous roaring, then he saw a V-shaped formation of bombing planes. The first one dipped, then another, and then the warship was roaring with exploding bombs. He turned from the port, and started aft again.

Dazed, he staggered from side to side of the tunnel. He had done what he could. What remained was for the navy to do. He staggered forward, saw a steel door in the hull, and fell to his knees, clawing at the dogs. He got one loose, then another.

**S**UDDENLY there was a wild shout. A man was rushing toward him, his face twisted with fury. Nathan Demarest! He sprang at Ponga Jim Mayo, clawing for a knife. Mayo caught the dogs, pulled himself erect, then stuck out his foot. Demarest was thrown off balance and went to his knees, then he was up. Ponga Jim jerked another of the dogs loose, and spun around, bracing himself for Demarest's charge.

The man flung himself forward, and Mayo started a punch. It landed, but Demarest struck him in the chest with a shoulder. The door gave suddenly behind them, and both crashed through, and fell, turning over and over, into the water!

Vaguely, Ponga Jim was grateful for the warmth of the water, then for its coolness. He felt someone clawing at him, pushed him away, then caught hold and kept pushing. Darkness swam nearer through the water, and he lost consciousness once more.

When his eyes opened he stared up at a sort of net of steel, and when he tried to turn his head his neck was stiff as though he had taken a lot of

punches. He tried to move, and someone said:

"Take it easy, Mister."

He managed to get his head turned, and saw a man in a British Naval uniform standing by.

"What happened?" he asked.

"Everything's okay," the seaman said. "You're on the *Markland*, of Sydney. This is one of the convoy."

The seaman stuck his head out the door. "Tell the Old Man this guy is coming out of it," he yelled.

Almost at once a big, broad-shouldered man came through the door with a hand out-stretched.

"Mayo!" he exclaimed. "Sink me for a lubber if I didn't get a start when they brought you over the side. You and that black man of yours!"

"What happened?" Ponga Jim asked. "How's the *Semiramis*?"

"Huh, you couldn't sink that old barge!" the captain roared. "Sure as my name's Brennan, you can't! But she's lost the starb'rd wing of her bridge, two guns are out of commission, there's a hole through the after deckhouse and about ten feet of taff-rail blown away, but no men killed. Some shrapnel wounds. The sub got back safe."

The door pushed open, and Major Arnold came in.

"Hi, Jim!" He gripped Mayo's hand, grinning. "You did it again, darn you!"

"The *Khamsin*?"

"Still afloat, but the navy's after her. They are fighting a running battle toward Bab el Mandeb. But she's down by the head and badly hurt. She'll never get away. Everything else is under control. We got Theron. Your boys wiped out Mullens and his gang when they tried to get Kernan and me. Had them covered before they started to open fire, and killed them all with automatics at close range."

Arnold turned toward the door.

"General Kernan is here," he informed, "with Skelton. They want to

see you. Skelton says he owes you an apology."

"Yeah?" Ponga Jim lifted himself on an elbow. "Listen, you—"

THE door opened and General Kernan and Skelton came in. Skelton smiled.

"Fine work, Captain! We'll see you get a decoration for this."

Ponga Jim stared at him; his eyes cold. For an instant there was silence, then Skelton's smile vanished, his eyes widened a little, and his muscles tensed.

"William," Ponga Jim said carefully, "arrest this man. He is a traitor. He was working hand in glove with Theron and I have documentary evidence to prove it!"

"What?" Kernan roared. "Why, man, you're insane! You're—"

Skelton's eyes narrowed, as he stared at Ponga Jim. Then he sprang back suddenly, and there was a gun in his hand.

"No," he said tightly, "he's right! If he says he has the evidence, I believe him. Theron told me someone stole some papers. Of course, it's true! I've made fools of you all! And if it hadn't been for this thick-skulled sailor with his fool's luck, I'd have won, too! And so would Theron. He's a great man, Theron is, a great man! Do you hear?" His voice rose to a scream, then cut off sharply. "All right! But you three will die, anyway. You three—"

Big London's powerful black arm slipped through the door and around Skelton's throat. It tightened suddenly. The gun roared, and the bullet flattened against the bulkhead. Then, London jerked, and there was an ominous crack. He dropped Skelton's body.

"I din mean for to kill 'im, Cap'n," he said. "But his neck was so little!"

"Who got me aboard here?" Jim said, ignoring the body.

Arnold swallowed. "Big London. He was coming behind in the small

boat with two others as you had suggested when you said you'd unload as soon as possible. He dived in after you."

"Demarest?"

"Was that who you were fighting with?" Arnold frowned. "I had been watching him. I had the dope on him, but before I could have him arrested, he slipped away." He hesitated. "By the way, when we flew down to join the convoy and see how this end was going, we brought somebody with us. She wants to see you."

"She?"

"Yes."

Jim looked toward the voice. Zara

Hammedan was standing in the door. "Are you surprised?"

"Surprised?" Ponga Jim looked up at Arnold with a grin. "William, can't you see the lady wants to be alone with me?"

Arnold gave a snort and turned toward the door.

"And by the way, old chap," Ponga Jim added, "don't slam the door when you go out!"

"That guy!" Arnold said sarcastically. "Shoot him, drop him over the side, and he comes up with a blonde under one arm, and a brunette under the other! What can you do with a guy like that?"

FEATURED NEXT ISSUE

## SINGAPORE SONG

*A Complete Malayan Spy Action Novel*

By WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN

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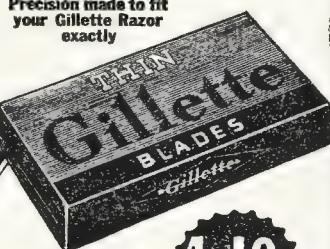
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"Dimly Garth saw Varney snatch a knife from the table and leap forward"

# HELL SHIP

By KEITH HAMMOND

*Author of "The Invaders," "Bells of Horror," etc.*

*Pirate Captain Garth Scoured the Seas With Murder—Until  
a Weird Love, More Potent Than Death, Avenged His Cruelties!*

CAPT. TIMOTHY GARTH lowered the spy glass and stamped thrice on the deck. In answer to the summons, a huge, swarthy-faced man, with curling, oiled moustachios, presently appeared from a hatchway and came hastily forward.

"See what you make of this, Cordera," Garth requested, extending the glass.

The mate obeyed, and whistled between his teeth.

"English, by the look of her. But she's no treasure ship. There's no convoy, Cap'n."

Garth was dipping snuff from a silver box that had once graced the desk of a colonial governor.

"Faith," he said, "I can see that. But how's our water?"

"Low, very low. And another man's down with scurvy."

"Water, meat and greens," the captain commented.

He bawled an order to the helmsman. "Run up an English flag, Cordera. Man the guns."

Garth took more snuff and leaned on the rail, watching. He did not resemble the conventional buccaneer. He was dressed in plain, rusty black, contrasting oddly with his hairless, gaunt face and bald skull. There was no color in his cheeks. Even his lips were the same waxy hue. His eyes were pale blue, and utterly expressionless. He was a small man, and went unarmed, yet the helmsman shivered slightly when he met Garth's cool glance.

At another time, the pirate might have ignored an English vessel that promised scant loot. But supplies were vitally necessary. A long voyage lay ahead, to meet a Dutch merchantman, laden with rich treasure.

Garth had secretly been informed of this by his spies. He had intended to replenish his stock at a neutral port that lay leagues astern, but the presence of warships there had dissuaded him. The discovery of the Englishman in these waters was lucky indeed.

A huge, half-naked Negro clambered down from aloft, and paused to sniff the air. "What is it, M'Duna?" Garth said. "D'you smell water, fresh water?"

The Negro nodded, smacking his lips.

"Yes, Captain. It is well."

He padded forward on bare, silent feet. Garth looked after M'Duna thoughtfully. Four years ago he had picked up the black, clinging to a floating tree-trunk, miles off the African coast. There had been little flesh on the man's body then, but the great frame bespoke a fighting, strong warrior, and a possible recruit.

Revived with rum and gorged with food, M'Duna had recovered and told

his story. He was a witch-doctor, it seemed, and for some reason he did not explain, his tribe had bound him to a tree trunk and set him adrift down an African river.

M'Duna's magic was an unknown quantity, but his hands were strong, and he could wield a cutlass with tireless ferocity. Also, his skill in drugs and medicines was uncannily efficient.

Men began to appear stealthily on the deck, bronzed, evil-looking cut-throats, clad in gaudy rag-tags. Knives and cutlasses glittered in the sunlight. Coarse powder was poured from horns. Pistols were primed, and pirates came to crouch silently beside the cannons. Here and there they hid, waiting, alert and watchful.

**D**ESPITE the heat there was no perspiration on Garth's bald skull. He took a pinch of snuff between his fingers, inhaled cautiously, sneezed, and nodded to Cordera, who had reappeared.

"She's running, I think. Clap on sail. The wind's with us, and we carry more canvas than the Englishman."

As Cordera sprang to obey, Garth nodded at M'Duna, who crouched by a cannon.

"Put a shot across their bows. That may change their minds."

The black worked swiftly, muttering orders. Carefully, he gauged his distance and lit the fuse. With a booming crash the cannon spat its charge. The ship rocked under the recoil.

"Good," said Garth. "The ball's spent, but it crossed their bows. Are they halting?"

They were not. The captain sighed, and sent a cabin boy for his pistols. Meanwhile, the crew were clapping on sail. Weather-stained canvas creaked and rattled under a stiff breeze. The pirate ship slipped faster through the tropical waters.

Garth donned his pistols. "Call me when we board. I'm going below," he said to Cordera.

He descended the companionway, went to his cabin, and examined his charts, lighting a slim, twisted

cigarro as he worked. His gray-white face was expressionless.

The creaking of canvas, the rattle of blocks, the whining of rope, drifted through the ports. Subconsciously, the seaman in Garth analyzed the reason for each individual sound. He could almost follow the progress of the pirate ship as it overtook its quarry. When Cordera's warning cry came, Garth was already rising from his seat.

He went up the ladder like a cat. Fresh, salt wind blew on his cheeks. Men were moving purposefully about the deck, carrying grappling-irons. Then a cannon bellowed, and a buccaneer screamed and fell, while the ball carried away part of the rail.

In answer, a musket cracked sharply, but no cannon retaliated. Garth had given his orders. He had liked the lines of the English ship, and, too, his own vessel was well known in these seas. Already, a plan had formed in his mind. He intended, presently, to scuttle his own ship and make use of the Englishman instead. No cannon must be fired at the craft which he already considered his own.

A noise of shouting arose. The acrid odor of burnt powder lay heavily above the decks. Between the ships the strip of blue water narrowed as the pirate overtook its victim.

**W**ITH a jolting shock the hulls crashed together. Both vessels heeled far over, swung away, and returned. Grappling hooks sailed through the air. The pirates swarmed over the rail, shouting.

They were met by a small, ill-armed but desperate band. The English fought bravely, but uselessly. One by one they were cut down without mercy.

The hot, sweet odor of blood was strong. Above the tumult could be heard the voice of Cordera shouting commands. M'Duna's bellow rose wordlessly. The black raged like a beast among the English, and his cutlass was red and dripping.

Garth remained perched on the rail, firing occasionally. Every shot told. Miraculously, he was unhurt, though a plain target.

It was over at last. Garth blew down the muzzles of his pistols, stepped to the victim's deck, and looked around. Corpses lay scattered here and there. Already, pirates were lifting them and tossing the limp cadavers overside.

A yell arose from the men. Cordera emerged from a companionway, dragging behind him the struggling form of a girl. She was English, slim and pale and yellow-haired as a shining sovereign. She was very lovely, and Captain Garth's filmy blue eyes took on a blind, ugly staring as he saw the girl.

"Prize o' war," Cordera shouted, hurling an inquisitive pirate aside with a careless blow. "The captain's wife, she is. Faith, this is loot worth having."

The girl fought with silent savagery. Cordera pinioned her wrists in one big hand.

"You forget the rules of shipboard, Cordera," Garth said. "The girl's mine, by right of first choice. If you want her, you've the choice of combat."

The mate hesitated, his swarthy face contorting. His lips were bared in a snarl. Then, slowly, he stepped back a pace and shrugged.

"She's yours," he said, with artificial lightness. "I wish you luck of her."

From one of the wounded Englishmen a cry burst. The girl struggled free and ran to fall on her knees beside the man. She staunched the blood that flowed from a wound in his shoulder.

Captain Garth came to stand above the two. His voice was silkily soft.

"By your dress, you're the captain of this ship," he said. "This woman is—your wife?"

The man said nothing. Cordera approached with the log, which he gave to Garth. The pirate captain glanced at it casually.

"Captain Varney, eh? And Mistress Bess Varney—by your leave!"

His lean hand closed, with surprising strength, on the girl's arm and lifted her. She cried out and fought.

"Wait!" Garth said swiftly. "Your husband won't be harmed."

Bess Varney quieted, watching with suspicious eyes.

"See that he's taken below and his wounds dressed. They're superficial, I think," Garth said to Cordera.

Varney was carried away. The pirates began to transfer their belongings to the English ship. Garth sent Bess below, in charge of M'Duna.

"Let her tend her husband. And guard her, M'Duna. Keep her safely."

The black obeyed.

**C**APTAIN GARTH leaned upon the rail and took snuff. The sea foam surging beneath him was, he thought, white as the English-woman's throat and arms. . . .

Against the tropical, starry night the pirate ship flamed red. Fire limned the mast. From figurehead to stern it blazed.

On the deck of the English craft, Garth stood, watching as the distance widened and the wake stretched phosphorescently astern. His old ship had served its turn. Now, gutted and useless, it was sinking slowly under the calm waters.

The end of the *Vulture*—and the launching of the *Fair Bess*. Garth's thin lips twisted in an ironic smile. Now, they could head swiftly for their destination, to meet and gut the Dutch merchantman.

On the decks, the buccaneers held revelry. They had gorged themselves on greens and fresh meat, and were rapidly drinking themselves into a drunken stupor. The sharp perfume of rum drowned the more delicate bouquet of fine wines of Jerez and Oporto. Lanterns painted the scene yellow. The whites of eyes shone from swarthy, grinning faces. Well, the men had earned their holiday.

M'Duna slipped up like a shadow behind the captain.

"Well?" Garth said, without turning.

"I have been watching the sea, and listening to the wind," the black whispered.

"Well? D'you smell more loot?"

"I smell evil," M'Duna said somberly. "The ghosts of my ancestors ride the winds tonight, and tell me of evil

following this ship. You would do well to cast the white woman overside."

"I gave you my orders," Garth said with quiet menace. "See that you obey them. How is the Englishman?"

"Still weak, but he lives. My medicine is strong."

With a grunt Garth turned away. He descended the ladder and made his way to a cabin's door. He opened it.

On a bunk Varney lay, bandaged and pale. Bess Varney rose from his side, with a sharp gasp of alarm.

Garth closed the door behind him. His face was expressionless. He looked at the girl.

"Come here," he whispered.

She shrank back, glancing down at her husband. But he lay unconscious, his eyes closed.

Garth crossed the room with three strides. His iron hands gripped the girl, drawing her close. She fought vainly, clawing, biting, scratching. When she had tired, Garth set his lips upon hers.

She lay in his arms like a dead woman.

The pirate released the girl. He drew back a pace.

"Your mouth is too cold for my taste. Mayhap this will make you more willing," he said.

He unsheathed a knife and bent above Captain Varney. The girl watched, wide-eyed. Suddenly, she screamed.

"You see," Garth said, smiling, "I do not want unwilling love. No, do not move. My blade is at his throat. Shall I let him live?"

His stare locked with the terrified girl's in silent antagonism. She made a soft whimpering noise and shuddered.

"We can pay ransom—"

"Only you can pay *his* ransom," Garth said.

She gnawed at her lips. "I cannot—"

"As you will," the pirate shrugged. "Your husband will not die quickly. He will be lashed till his body is one red wound. Salt will be rubbed into the cuts."

"Suppose I—pay the ransom. What

then?" the English girl said, almost inaudibly.

"He will live. If you pay—willingly."

THIS time, she did not fight when Garth drew her close. She responded to his kiss. But suddenly, the pirate cursed and thrust her away.

"Your eyes," he growled. "There is no love in them!"

He burst out of the cabin, past a guard stationed there, and went on deck, where he paced about, breathing audibly. The cool night breeze could not cool his cheeks. Presently, he became aware of M'Duna's great form towering beside the rail. He approached the black.

"Well?" he asked. "Do the winds still tell of death?"

M'Duna nodded slowly. "Be careful that it isn't your own," Garth said. "Listen to me! You're skilled in drugs, and you say you're a witch-doctor. Can you make for me a love philtre?"

"Perhaps," M'Duna said. "It is not easy to turn hatred into love, or steel to silver."

Garth stared up at the stars.

"I am no swinish beast. Any woman I hold must love me! And I must have this English wench. I must have her, and there must be no hatred in her eyes."

"I can make you a love-philtre," the black nodded, "but it is magic that you ask, not merely herbs and drugs. Such an elixir must dig deep into the roots of the soul. That is not easy."

"It must be strong," Garth said.

"Sorcery is strong. In my own jungle I learned how to turn hatred to love. Love that will burn away everything else—fear and hunger and thirst. Who quaffs the elixir will have no other thought but for you."

"She hates me," Garth muttered. "It will be strong potent?"

"Stronger than death," M'Duna said. "But I think you should cast the woman overside, or else take her against her will."

"She is a madness in my blood," the pirate groaned. "Never before have I felt this. Her body I can have

easily, but that is not enough. Blood of God!"—He beat the rail with his fists—"She is a witch! Make me your love philtre, M'Duna! And swiftly!"

The black melted away like a shadow. On the deck the crew yelled and revelled, but more faintly now. The stupor of drunken exhaustion was overtaking them.

Far, far on the horizon a speck of red died. The *Vulture* was finding its grave, fathoms deep.

The hours dragged past slowly. But it was not yet dawn when Garth entered his prisoners' cabin, holding the door wide to permit the entry of a pirate bearing a table on which food and bottles lay. When the man had left, Garth closed the door and stared emotionlessly at Bess Varney. The girl stood protectingly before the bunk where her husband lay.

"How is he?" Garth asked. "Better?" There was no response. The pirate went on. "M'Duna is skilled enough. He'll recover, that pasty-faced husband of yours."

Silence filled the cabin.

Garth drew two chairs to the table, sat down in one, and began to rearrange the food.

"Neither of you will be harmed," he said, without looking at Bess. "I'll set you down at the first neutral port we touch. Don't stand there gaping at me! Sit down and eat with me. That's the least you can do."

The girl whispered, "I cannot believe . . ."

**G**ARTH laughed mirthlessly.

"No? I've taken your ship and everything that's in it. I've taken the lives of crew and officers. I wanted your love, but since you do not choose to give it, I'll have nothing less. Call me a fool, if you wish, but you are both safe. Now will you sit down and eat with me?"

Warily, like a timid animal, she came to stand beside the chair.

"If you are not trying some trickery—"

Garth poured wine. "If your husband is awake, he can join us."

Bess turned to look, and simultaneously the pirate emptied the contents of a small vial into the girl's glass.

When she glanced back at the table, Garth was lifting his goblet to his lips.

"I am not lying," he said heavily. "I pledge your health—and your husbands'."

He drained the wine to the dregs.

"I—I am grateful," the girl whispered.

She sipped her wine. Color came into her pale cheeks.

Garth watched her narrowly, sitting there in the lamplight. Her yellow hair was golden-bright. Her lips were tenderly inviting. With an effort he restrained himself and sat quietly, waiting.

Tension grew within the cabin. What had M'Duna said?

"The philtre will not fail. It is strong, stronger than death." But would it be stronger than—hate?

Garth read the answer in the English girl's eyes. He stood up, and she rose at the same time. She came into his arms, willingly, this time, and the pirate's heart leaped up with mad exultation. Though sorcery had given him this treasure—yet the girl's love was his!

A hoarse, rasping cry cut through the haze that dimmed Garth's vision. Over Bess' shoulder he saw the Englishman propped up on his bunk. The man's face was dreadful.

"Bess!" he cried, and again, "Bess!"

The girl lifted her lips to Garth's.

At that a furious yell burst from Varney. The man shouted an oath. He sprang up and reeled across the room. Garth was caught by surprise. He had thought the Englishman helplessly weak.

A vicious blow smashed the pirate back, half stunning him. Garth fell against the wall, trying to regain his scattered senses. Dimly he saw Varney snatch up a knife from the table and leap forward.

The blade drove down at Garth's throat.

Then there was a flash of white. The steel sheathed itself in flesh—but not Garth's. And Bess Varney, crying out with pain, reeled and dropped, the knife-hilt protruding from her breast.

The Englishman dropped to his

knees beside her. He gasped frantic, meaningless words.

Bess' eyes opened. She looked up at Garth. In her gaze was not hatred, but love—love induced by the sorcery of M'Duna.

She sighed softly and went limp.

Garth kicked open the door. The guard hastily entered. He stared, and looked inquiringly at the captain.

"Take the Englishman," Garth said very softly. "Bind him securely. I do not want him hurt—yet."

**T**HE pirate's hand held a small, sharp knife. His thumb slipped slowly along the blade—slowly—

M'Duna entered. Garth looked at him, and then at the body of the Englishwoman.

"You wanted her cast overside," the captain said. "Do that now."

The black lifted the limp corpse, tossed it over one brawny shoulder, and went out. Garth followed him to the deck, and stood behind the witch-doctor, fingering his knife.

M'Duna halted at the rail. With a powerful heave he cast Bess Varney overside.

Simultaneously Garth sheathed his knife in the Negro's naked back. The power behind the blow thrust M'Duna off balance. He cried out once, and was gone.

Silvery spray flew high.

Garth's face was leprous-white in the gray dawn. He wiped the knife on his sleeve, and his shallow blue eyes were blank and expressionless.

One of the crew approached. Garth looked at him.

"Where is the Englishman?"

The man licked his lips nervously. "In the lazaret, Captain."

"I shall be there for a while," Garth said softly. "See that I am not disturbed."

He moved toward the companion-way . . .

That day a deed of nameless darkness was done aboard the *Fair Bess*. The setting sun reddened, rather unnecessarily, the flayed body of a man. It floated for a time in the wake, and then sank.

So the ship sailed on, to meet the Dutch merchantman. And Garth

seemed to throw off the spell that had held him in thrall. He still held aloof from the others, but drank rum with Cordera and paced the deck as of old. Often, though, he looked astern, and once, several days later, called for his spyglass and peered through it for a long time.

"What is it?" Cordera asked, coming up. "A derelict, or what?"

"A dead shark, probably, floating belly up," the captain grunted. "Get me some Madeira, Cordera. My guts are rumbling against my spine."

He telescoped the glass and lit a cigarette.

Night came with tropical suddenness. The Southern Cross blazed with pallid splendor in the purple sky. In the captain's cabin Garth and Cordera sat at a table.

The mate gorged himself, spearing meat with his dagger and wiping his greasy lips with his sleeve at intervals. Garth, on the other hand, ate rather daintily, sipping wine of Jerez. Once he shivered.

"Close the port, Cordera," he requested. "It's turned cold suddenly."

"I don't feel it," the other grunted, but obeyed.

Returning to his place, he gnawed at a mutton bone.

"I'll be more than glad when this voyage is over," Garth muttered, bending and unbending a fork in his strong fingers. "I think I'll head for Barbados after we've taken the Dutchman. I fear I'm getting old, Cordera."

**H**IS bleak, icy gaze was dull.

"You won't die of old age, I'll vow," the mate grinned. His face gleamed with grease and sweat in the swinging lamplight. Shadows danced on the walls. "Perhaps . . ."

"Hark!" Garth said suddenly, lifting his hand.

The room filled with heavy silence, broken only by the lapping of wavelets against the hull.

"What is it?" Cordera asked after a time.

"Nothing, I suppose," said Garth, shrugging. He drank more sherry. "My ears are playing me tricks."

A low, hesitant knock sounded on

the door. Garth glanced over his shoulder.

"Come in," he said.

After a moment, he irritably repeated the request. But the door did not open.

The captain nodded at Cordera, who rose and went to the threshold. The lock clicked under his fingers, the panel swung wide. No one was in the corridor.

"Some fool's prank," Garth snarled. "I'll . . . God's death! What ails you, man?"

Cordera had turned to the captain a face from which every vestige of color had fled. His black mustachios stood out startlingly against the white cheeks. The mate wet his lips, strove in vain to speak, and finally achieved a whisper.

"Something—went past me!"

"What?" Garth began to laugh in amazed disbelief. "Faith! What manner of tale is this? What passed you? A wind?" He thrust a brandy bottle at Cordera. "Here, have some of this, else you'll faint, perhaps."

He smiled mockingly, but his pale eyes watched with keen alertness.

Cordera drank brandy, shuddered, and came back to his place at the table. He did not speak again till a good deal of the spirit had slipped down his gullet. Then a flush was back in his swarthy cheeks, and he joined in Garth's ironic laughter.

"I've drunk too much," he admitted, "or, more likely, not enough. Another swallow."

He proceeded to get thoroughly intoxicated. Garth drank with him, draught for draught, but the liquor did not seem to affect the pirate captain. He waited, watching the other.

Cordera put his head on the table and began to mutter thickly.

"What passed you at the door, man?" Garth said quietly.

"There was an old woman in Portugal," the mate said vaguely. "I was a lad then, Captain, and she used to tell me stories."

"Faugh!" There was disgust in Garth's ejaculation.

"Superstitions, they were. I remember one. When you hear a knocking at the door—and there is no one out-

side—you should never say, 'Come in'. For you will be talking to the dead, Captain—"

Cordera's muffled voice died away. His head rolled and lay motionless, pillowed on his arms. The swinging lamp cast dancing patches of light on his blue black hair and his deeply bronzed cheek.

"Close the window," Cordera mumbled. "I smell sea-water."

Involuntarily Garth glanced at the port. It was still closed. But there was a strong odor of salt water in the cabin.

**N**ATURALLY! And a pine forest would smell of pine. Lighting a *cigarro*, Garth rose and went to the door. For some reason he hesitated, his hand on the latch.

Then he swung the panel wide. Shadows fled away down the corridor. From the hatchway came the sound of voices in muffled argument. Pirates were casting dice on deck.

Garth looked down. His *cigarro* went out unheeded in his hand. It was strange that there should be a puddle of brine just beyond the threshold—strange.

And now an inexplicable sense of tension became evident aboard the *Fair Bess*. The men were inclined to gather in small knots and bands at night. And often, without reason, a pirate would pause, listening intently, though for what he could scarcely say. The change was in the very atmosphere. Cordera spoke to Garth about it.

"They say we carry a—a passenger," the mate said, standing beside Garth at the rail. "They talk of blood-guilt and—other things."

"Flog 'em till they learn better," the captain suggested. "A passenger, God's death! Has anyone seen this—passenger?"

But Cordera pulled uneasily at his mustachios.

"Yes," he said, "or that is the story, anyway. And they do not see clearly. They say that M'Duna was a sorcerer."

"They fear the ghost of a black man?" Garth asked.

"They do not say it is M'Duna.

There was another. . . . Captain Varney had reason enough to return."

"You're a superstitious fool," Garth said. "The death I gave Varney is far stronger than any hatred he might bear me, or any wish for vengeance. The dead sleep soundly. . . ." He stopped suddenly, and then went on in a changed voice. "Death is stronger than all else, hatred, or—or love."

He turned and went out of sight in the darkness. Abruptly, his voice rose in a startled cry. Cordera's face blanched. Then he snatched up a lantern and ran in pursuit. He blundered into his captain on the poop.

Garth stood motionless, his face without expression. He licked his lips, staring at Cordera.

"What—" The latter looked a question.

"Nothing," Garth said. "A rope's end. It touched me on the cheek. Your mad tales of walking corpses!" His voice rose high in a gust of passion. "I'll hear no more of it. See to it that the men wag their tongues less freely!"

His shallow blue eyes were ablaze. He strode past Cordera and was gone.

The mate did not follow. He held the lantern high and looked around. He seemed to be searching for something—perhaps a dangling rope. But at last he shivered and went back hastily toward the rail.

So the *Fair Bess* sailed on, with a stiff, spanking breeze fattening the sails. And the days were blue and cloudless, and the sea calm enough. But the ship was not as fine as the pirates had thought, for a strong sea-stench of brine began to pervade it. Going aloft at night, the men would hesitate before reaching through the gloom for stays and spars. The look of a fat, furled sail high above the deck is oddly reminiscent of something else.

And now Captain Garth seldom emerged from his cabin these days. He drank much, and never lost his sobriety. Also, he went armed, and carried a cutlass as well.

"The men are restless," he told Cordera. "It's best not to invite mutiny."

Once, he would never have troubled to explain his actions.

The men were, indeed, restless. They were frightened. And nothing on earth could have aroused apprehension in those hard-bitten, murder-redened scoundrels. They gathered in furtive knots on the deck and glanced warily aloft and into the shadows. And they whispered that the *Fair Bess* carried a passenger.

Soft footfalls in the night. The rustling of garments. The sound of slowly dripping water. Brine-puddles found in illogical places. And swift, half-seen movements glimpsed from the corner of one's eye—movements less seen than guessed and imagined. The men said that *one* walked the decks by night.

The cook came blubbering out of his galley with a fantastic story. Captain Garth pushed through the crowd and collared the man.

Garth cast the cook from him with a furious gesture. He drew his pistol, primed and cocked it.

"Come below with me. We must see to this," he said to Cordera.

The pirates waited silently as the officers vanished down the hatch, bearing a lantern.

A mulatto nudged the cook.

"It was M'Duna, no?" he whispered.

"It was not M'Duna."

"Then it was he whom the captain flayed?"

"Not unless the sea washed him white. *Dios!*"

Presently Garth and Cordera returned, looking rather pale and haggard. The captain's cold eye dwelt on the band of pirates.

"Nothing was down there, naturally." He glanced at the cook. "Cordera, give this man twenty lashes. It

*Derek Weston Goes into Action Against Tricky Foes with a Few Pet Tricks of His Own*



IN

## SINGAPORE SONG

A Novel of Malayan Spy Intrigue

By WILLIAM O'SULLIVAN

*Featured in Next Month's Issue of THRILLING ADVENTURES*

"What's this you're saying," he snarled, "about—"

"It's true," the cook gasped, his fat face shaking like jelly. "Dios, protect us! I saw the—the—"

"Well? What?" Garth's fingers tightened convulsively.

"Below! I'd gone below for flour, and I'd left the hatch open. I hadn't taken a lantern. It was dark—I saw a flour-sack and put my hands on it to lift it—"

The man shut his eyes and ground his teeth in a very ecstasy of fear and loathing.

"Well? Out with it, or I'll cram my cutlass down your throat, you sniveling pig!"

"It was not a flour-sack!" the man whispered. "Under my hands it moved and sighed."

will teach him to hold his tongue in future."

But after that Garth remained more and more in his cabin, keeping the door locked. And the ship sailed on, bearing its cargo of fear and mystery. The tension mounted.

One day, Cordera descended the ladder and halted before Garth's door. He rattled the latch, knocked, and, immersed in his thoughts, did not hear the captain's query, "Who's there?" Absently, he knocked again.

A gun crashed within the cabin. A bullet burst through the panel, just missing Cordera. He sprang back swiftly, retreating down the passageway. Had the captain gone mad?

"Captain Garth!" the mate called. "It's Cordera." He took his pistol from his belt, holding it warily.

A locked door clicked and opened. Garth's face appeared. In the gloom it was ghastly white.

"Cordera, eh?" the man said. "Come in. Next time answer when I ask who's there!" he added with sudden savagery. "How was I to know it was you at the door?"

Silently, Cordera followed the other into the cabin. Garth poured himself a stiff hooker of rum. His pale eyes probed the mate.

"Someone was knocking at my door last night," he said quietly. "The first time, I opened it. It was very dark, but something touched me — my throat."

"To—strangle you?" Cordera asked almost involuntarily.

Garth's white face twisted in a spasm of disgust.

"To—caress me!" he said, half choking with horror. "It put its arms about my neck and"—The captain ground his teeth and scrubbed at his lips with the back of his hand—"Merciful God!" he groaned.

"I—I tore free and slammed the door in its face. But—it meant me no harm, Cordera! That was the most frightful thing of all. It was wet, and cold, and smelled of the sea." Garth poured more rum and quaffed it. "It was an ill dream to have, eh?" he said unsteadily.

Cordera did not answer for a moment. "Yes," he agreed at last. "An ill dream indeed."

Garth set down his glass.

"Well," he asked. "What brings you here?"

"We have sighted the Dutchman."

"Good!" Garth drew a deep breath and expelled it slowly. "Shall we go on deck?" He paused at the door. "The lock's broken. That must be fixed."

The two men mounted the ladder. It was just past mid-day. A speck on the horizon was clearer through the glass. It was the Dutch merchantman, squat, low-beamed, and wallowing in the trough. Already pirates were climbing aloft to clasp on sail.

"We'll catch her soon," Garth said.

But he was wrong. Despite the ungainly bulk of the Dutch ship, she carried a good deal of canvas. The

lean, fast power of the *Fair Bess* overtook the quarry slowly.

"England isn't at war with Holland, as far as I know," Garth pondered. "She has no reason to flee. She's merely taking advantage of the wind."

The hours crept on. Red flame of sunset gathered in the West. A splotch of blood stained the ocean. And in the twilight, the two ships came closer.

With the thickening gloom, Garth became uneasy. He paced about, casting swift glances into the shadows. At length, he turned to Cordera.

"I'm going to my cabin. Call me when we board." He went below.

THE pirates swarmed over the deck, crouching by the cannon, gripping their muskets, pistols and cutlasses. Cordera made a trumpet of his hands and hailed the Dutchman. A reply came back.

The quarry was unsuspicious.

"We need water," Cordera shouted. "We'll pay for it in English sovereigns. Can you spare us some?"

"Ja. Lay to, and we send a boat."

The ships drew closer together. Men gripped their grappling-irons and waited as the *Fair Bess* drove on. From the Dutchman's deck rose a startled cry.

"Hold! You will ram us!"

And then a shout:

"Pirates! They are pirates!"

The hulls crashed together. Hooks and ropes sailed up. Over the rail poured the buccaneers.

Cordera halted suddenly. A cry had welled up from below. The captain's voice, full of fear and anguish and horror. Garth shrieked like a trapped beast.

Cordera's face blanched. He made a whimpering sound deep in his throat, suddenly turned, and, pistol cocked, fled below decks. He cried over his shoulder:

"Board, lads! I'll be back."

The decks were a bedlam. Steel flashed in the thickening dark. Shots cracked. Acrid powder smoke drifted on the wind. But, leaderless, the pirates were handicapped. They looked about for their officers.

Suddenly, Cordera reappeared. He rose into view from the open hatch, his mouth open in a gaping circle. He was unarmed, and a wordless, inarticulate crying burst from his throat. Flailing the air with his arms, he rushed toward the rail, poised there for a moment, and leaped overboard between the ships.

The hulls swayed apart, drove together again, with a grinding crash. From the invisible Cordera a scream came—and was cut off. . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

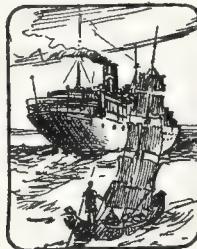
Entry in the log of the *Grootje Amsterdam*:

" . . . the pirates, being leaderless, were finally defeated. Those who were not killed

were taken captive. After that, we searched their ship. In the captain's cabin we found a most curious thing, and one which will probably remain a mystery. The lock on the door was broken, and the door itself was wide open. Within the cabin we found two bodies locked together upon the floor. The undermost, I later learned, was the pirate chief, a man named Timothy Garth. What had killed him I do not know, for there was no wound on his body. From the look on his face, I should judge that he died of fear.

"The other body was that of an Englishwoman. She had obviously been dead for weeks, and a dagger-hilt still protruded from the breast. The woman's arms were clasped tightly about the man's neck, and we found it impossible to separate the two bodies.

"I gave them sea burial at dawn. . . ."



COMING IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

## BATTLE STATIONS

A Novelet of War With Japan

By HENRY KUTTNER

AND MANY OTHER STORIES

NO FINER DRINK EAST OR  
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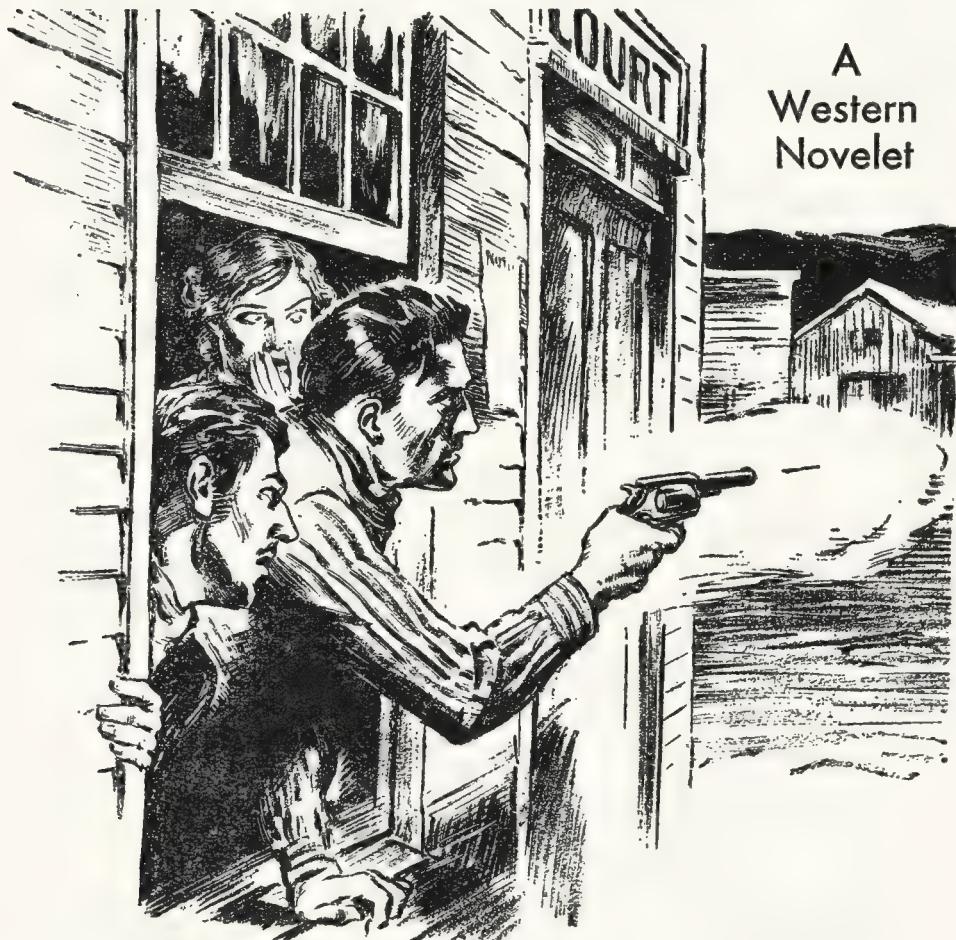


Purity...in the big big bottle — that's Pepsi-Cola!



# VOICES of the

A  
Western  
Novelet



## CHAPTER I

### *Call of the Wild*

JUDGE TRASK'S voice was a blurred drone as he read the dull, wordy indictment. The prisoner was the only person in the hot, crowded courtroom who seemed not to be listening as he finally summed it up with:

"Seldom Seen Smith, you're charged with the murder of Orin Ott, a human

being. Now what is your plea, guilty or not guilty?"

The young man with the peculiar given name stood tall and erect and clean before the bar of justice; and his gaze strayed out through the courthouse window, past the raw, ugly little town to the blue, timbered wilderness beyond.

Some mysterious call out in that wild, free country spoke louder than the bald, bespectacled judge.

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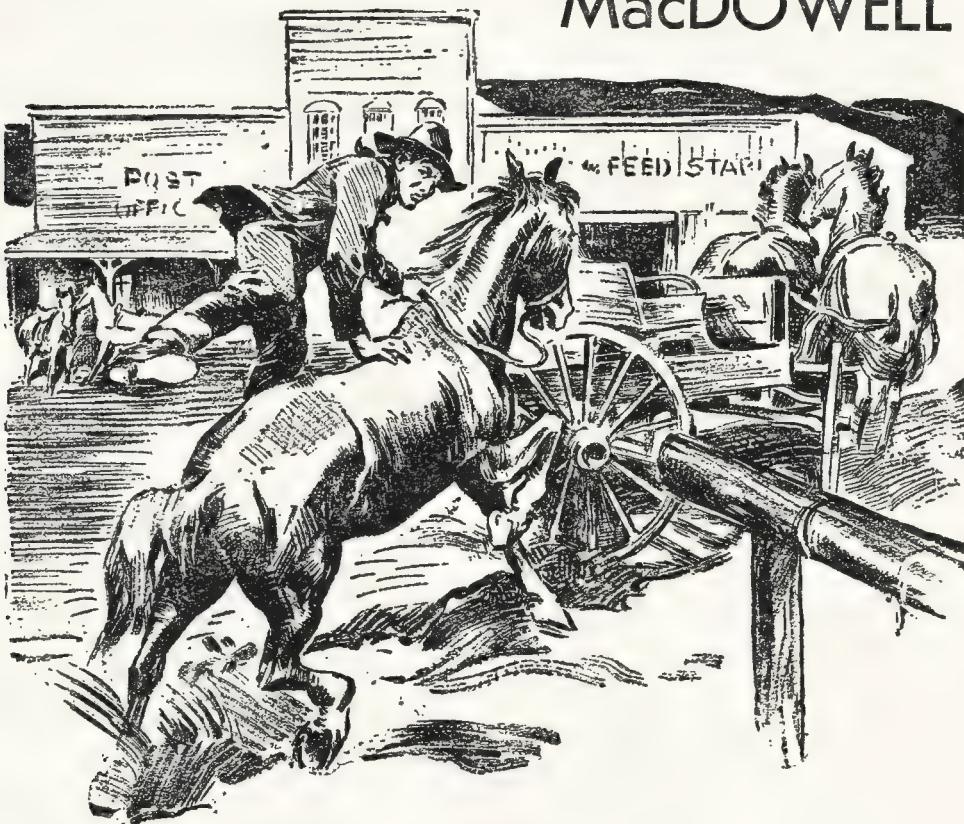
**Civilization Called "Seldom Seen" an Outlaw**

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# WILDERNESS

By SYL  
MacDOWELL

Milo Ott, deaf to all entreaties,  
fired as Seldom Seen sprang  
onto the red horse



At last he looked up at Judge Trask with clear blue eyes in which ice and fire alternately shone. "It happened a good deal like you say, Judge," he said. "Only it don't tell *why* I went after Orin Ott. He started that fire. Everybody knows it."

The judge scowled over the top of his glasses.

"The dead man's not on trial!" he stated severely. "If you went gunning for every stockman that burned

off worthless scrub to improve grazing, you'd mighty soon depopulate Window Rock Valley."

"If you think that burn was a good thing, Judge, with all the helpless wild critters that died in it," the prisoner argued mildly, "then maybe you figure Orin Ott done right when he dynamited the beaver dams up Clear Creek. Just to bring a head o' ditch water down onto his hay ranch. I warned him then."

---

*but the Animal World Knew His Worth!*

"And I'm warning you, Seldom Seen Smith, that your odd ideas ain't no legal excuse! Now what's your plea?"

"Let me make one more remark, Judge. Who's idea was it, tacking on that part saying Orin Ott was a human being?"

"What'd you take him for, a chimpanzee?" snapped Judge Trask.

A few sweaty spectators snickered slyly. But they were instantly still as a lean, hard man in a worn leather jacket bobbed up among them.

**E**VERYBODY knew Milo Ott, the dead man's brother, and his partner in the big Double-O outfit. Half the cattle on the Window Rock range wore the Ott brand and lately the Double-O had branched out with sheep.

"We didn't come tuh listen tuh no fun-makin'," Milo Ott declared in a rapid, husky voice. "We come for a hangin'!"

He sat down as abruptly as he had risen, with the manner of a man who held the whiphand and knew it. The Ott's had put old man Trask on the bench. Their power had elected the fat, thoughtful sheriff who dawdled near the prisoner. The Double-O ran Window Rock Valley. Now, with Orin dead, Milo Ott was the Double-O.

Judge Trask caught on. He fingered his wilted collar and flushed reddly. He wagged a hand at the sheriff.

"Joe, raise a window. It's closer'n a shearing shed in here." Again he slanted his judicial scowl on Seldom Seen Smith.

"You as good as admitted the crime already, but the law says you got to make a plea. Talk up—guilty or not guilty?"

Sheriff Joe Hornby slid his two hundred pounds off of the judge's platform, his low-holstered Colt clumping against it. He crossed to the window which gave the far view of

the mountains, and forced it upwards. He lingered there an instant, as a cooling breeze swept his somber, wide mustached face.

Seldom Seen Smith acted with the flashing force of heat lightning. A long, running dive landed him on the sheriff's broad back, battering Joe Hornby to the wall. The Colt flicked out of its holster into the prisoner's hand. The sheriff made a futile grab. Then Seldom Seen Smith was outside, running for the hitchrail.

The courtroom crowd was stunned. But it boiled with confusion as Milo Ott shouted an oath and rushed to the window. He knocked the gasping sheriff aside and drew a six-gun from inside his leather jacket.

The first blast shook the window as Seldom Seen unknotted a bare-backed horse tied to the back of a buckboard. The bullet went high.



Milo Ott aimed again, more carefully, as Seldom Seen's nimble hands whipped a hackamore of the tie-rope over the horse's muzzle. The rest of the animals at the hitchrail were snorting and shying. But this one was obedient to the fugitive's touch. It was Ott's horse, a slick young red. But Seldom Seen had broken and trained it.

At the window, Milo Ott beaded fine. As his finger curled on the trigger, his wife seized him from behind. She was a thin, worn woman, with graying hair and frenzied fear in her eyes.

"Don't shoot, Milo, don't shoot!" she shrilled. "Look, the baby. . . ."

Without turning, Milo Ott slapped

back with the gun barrel. The quick blow laid open a jagged cut on her pale cheek, staggering her. The sheriff steadied her, and then Ott fired as Seldom Seen sprang onto the red horse.

He was directly behind the buckboard seat. On that seat, bundled in a blue blanket, lay the most precious possession of Milo Ott's unhappy wife. The bullet smacked into the back of the seat, less than a foot above the sleeping baby.

"Good God, Milo!" blurted the sheriff.

That second bullet must have nicked the ear of one of the buckboard span; for they leaped, pawed, broke away and whirled.

The buckboard turned on two wheels, almost overturning. Down through the town bolted the runaways. It seemed that at any instant the baby would be thrown from the jouncing seat, into the whirling, slashing spokes.

"Yuh done it now!" bawled the appalled sheriff, clambering clumsily out of the window, heedless of Milo Ott's reckless gunning.

"Save my baby!" screamed the Ott woman, with blood streaming down her ashen cheek. "Please, somebody save him!"

Milo Ott was bowling through people for the courtroom doorway. He yelled back:

"It was yore doin's, leavin' the brat out there!"

He grabbed the nearest horse out of the milling bunch at the hitchrail. He hit the saddle and started.

That moment bared Milo Ott's character more completely than anything Window Rock folks had known before. He didn't race after the runaway buckboard. He reined furiously for Seldom Seen, who had streaked for the open sageland that sloped towards the mountains.

Barely had he started when an amazed shout went up from the crowd. At the stricken cry of Ott's

wife, Seldom Seen had pulled up the running red. He brought it around with a haul on the hackamore rope and spurted through the town in pursuit of the buckboard!

Here was heroism that reached the hearts of rough and ready ranchfolk. Their shouts became cheers.

"He just figgers tuh shield hisself again with the kid!" Ott yelled at them. He fired again and the fugitive twisted and grabbed at his side. Heedless of indignant yells, Ott blasted away again as he tore after his man.

Seldom Seen closed in on the buckboard. He swerved close, leaned so widely sidewise that it seemed he surely would fall. His sure hands clutched the fluttering blanket. He lifted the little burden clear. Then, tight-pulling the red to a stop, he gently lowered the baby to the ground beside the horse.

That pause would have cost him his life if Milo Ott had not wildly emptied his six-gun in the dash through town. For they were hardly fifty yards apart.

Ott could have thumped to the dust, too, for the sheriff's Colt was tucked in Seldom Seen's middle. He made no move to draw.

He made for the open sage again and Ott followed, reloading. The sheriff had requisitioned a horse and pounded alongside.

"I put lead in him!" jangled Ott.

"And in yore own youngster, too, almost," blazed Joe Hornby.

## CHAPTER II

### *Law of the Wild*



HE sage looked as though it lifted gently to the mountains. Actually, the long slope was a maze of shallow gullies and low ridges in which the fugitive dipped out of sight at intervals, then reappeared again, always a little farther ahead of the sheriff and the posse. A

posse which Milo Ott harangued and lashed and urged to greater haste.

But the red was top horse in that long, hard pursuit. It needed neither bit nor spur. It was no ordinary bronc and Seldom Seen was no ordinary bronc-breaker. Even the Ott's, in the days when he rode for the Double-O, admitted that he had "a way with hosses."

His complete mastery over the red horse, with only a rope to handle it Indian-fashion, was typical of his strange influence over all animals. That was a mystical power born in some men. In Seldom Seen that power existed to a noteworthy degree, and out of it he had formed convictions that gradually had thrust him apart from humankind. People did not always admire an outstanding attainment, especially when it was one that they did not understand.

That feeling developed into a barrier that grew between Seldom Seen and Window Rock settlers. A man apart, he spent long weeks alone in the far places. Window Rock pondered on what he did during those prolonged absences. Many people considered him something of an outcast.

But he was more than outcast now. He was outlaw, renegade—a wanted man. Wounded he rode, scornful of the posse, not knowing, that secretly and silently they admired him now and hoped that he would get away and would not be pursuing him at all were it not for the will and influence of Milo Ott.

The experience of that hour past left a mark deeper than the rib slash from Milo Ott's bullet.

"Law!" he reflected bitterly. "Justice! Progress! There's more goodness in brutes than in men! What they call civilization is destruction! I'm done with them and their doings! From now on, I'm a marauder!"

The law of the wilderness was harsh, but no harsher than the law of men; and there was no corrupting

it. Such bitter thoughts as these rode with Seldom Seen until he reached a sharp crest where granite outcrops offered a temporary refuge.

He concealed himself and the red horse there, resting the animal while he watched his oncoming pursuers. And he pulled up his shirt to examine the welling, gory furrow in his side.

"Every drop o' blood I'm shedding will be charged up to you, Milo Ott!" he swore grimly. "I'll live to see you roam and suffer and go hungry on this land you claim as your own! On this soil that in the end will claim you!"

**H**E DIDN'T pause for long. Past the outcrops he dipped into a cross-canyon that hemmed the base of hills that tilted steeply to the mountain timber.

Reaching the sandy, flood-sashed bottom, he proceeded up-canyon with the manner of a man who knew exactly where he was going. After a mile or two he stopped at the mouth of an old tunnel. It was only slightly above the floor of the canyon. It pierced a crumbly wall, whitely streaked with quartz. It was an old prospect hole, dug so many years before that brushy growth had taken hold on the weathered dump and almost concealed the opening.

"Here's where we part company, Red," he said affectionately, dismounting and unknotting the hackamore rope. He coiled it in his hand, then swung the coil and clucked the red horse up the canyon. He watched it go regretfully.

"I'm on my own now," he breathed. "But my chances are better'n if I'd told the judge how Orin Ott really got killed, and why. Because he'd never o' believed me. Nobody else would."

So he took a final look at the clean sky, deeply inhaled, then dropped to his knees and crawled over the cave-in slide and underground.

His movements now were as careful and calculating as though he had actually rehearsed them, instead of

merely planning as he had in the courtroom while Judge Trask read the indictment. Just inside the cavein, the old tunnel was timbered. The timbering was old and rotten. In the dim light he located a rotting upright and tied the rope to it. He backed farther into the tunnel, then he threw his weight into a hard pull.

The effort sent a surge of pain through his wound but the timber creaked and gave. He pulled again, harder. It grated and slanted away from the tunnel roof. There was a last flicker of daylight as the tunnel mouth collapsed. Down came rock and loose earth with a thudding crash. He was entombed in absolute darkness that reeked with dust.

His plan had worked. He had deliberately sealed himself in the old workings. Thicker than any prison wall was that mass of boulders and debris. And it was so hidden that riders along the canyon would not see it, would never guess that their fugitive was hidden just a few yards away.

But it did seem suicidal. For getting out was fraught with dire uncertainty. Especially so, with the handicap of his wound.

He was glad when the sift and rattle of falling stuff ceased. He groped his way back into the tunnel, then, until his foot splashed into a shallow pool. He knelt and drank of the icy water.

Once, months ago, he had cached food here. That was before he knew that he would ever have such desperate need of it, as a hunted outlaw. He rose, exploring the damp, unseen wall until he found the niche where the cache should be, in a tight-lidded can.

**H**E WAS startled when his hand encountered not the can but a wooden box. He lifted it down, blindly feeling the contents.

First, a small blunted pick. Then a small but heavy canvas sack. Next,

candles and with them a glass jar. He opened the screw lid of the jar. Matches. Wonderingly, he struck one and touched it to the wick of a partly-burned candle.

The tiny blob of light was comforting; but what it revealed was not. Somebody had visited this place since he was last here. That somebody had removed the food and had gouged out a narrow vein in the side of the tunnel, where the water seeped into the pool. He saw boot tracks. And in the wooden box that he had lifted down from the niche he saw something else that increased his alarm.

It was a document in the bottom of the glass jar, folded in such fashion that he saw Judge Trask's signature at the bottom. It was a mineral claim notice on the abandoned diggings. Orin Ott had made the filing. Not the Ott brothers, not the living Milo, but Orin Ott. The Ott's had not shared in this. But now, with Orin dead, the claim reverted along with sole Double-O ownership to Milo.

Seldom Seen now jerked open the canvas sack, spilled out some crumbly ore shot heavily with glittering specks, and instantly knew that here was fabulously rich gold.

Gone now was the security that Seldom Seen had felt when he chose the old tunnel for a hideout. By now, Milo Ott must know of this location, through inheritance of his brother's property. The posse, by now combing the cross canyon, might miss the old mine. But Milo Ott would not. Finding the fresh cavein, would he guess the fugitive's desperate ruse?

He held the candle close to the spilled ore. A showing so rich would account for many baffling actions on the part of Milo Ott. Gold and greed were evil twins that sowed discord, betrayal and tragedy. More than ever it was imperative that he escape Milo Ott; and almost as important in this tangle of hidden motive and dire deed was that Milo Ott should remain alive until needed.

## CHAPTER III

*Friend Coyote*

HERIFF JOE HORNBY was back in his office after a futile all night man-hunt. He was surrounded by a weary circle of possemen and some townsfolk who prodded him with questions.

Joe Hornby gestured irritably as though driving off nagging flies.

"Why ask me? I got a crawful o' questions o' my own that I ain't got no answers for!" he complained.

"Let's hear 'em," demanded one of his critics.

"All right—why was Milo Ott so dead set on gunning the prisoner that he risked his own young 'un?"

"Milo is that sort of man."

"But that don't explain why Seldom Seen ran the gantlet without makin' no move tuh shoot back! Here's what I can't figger out:

"On one hand, he's charged with murderin' Orin Ott. But right before our eyes he risks his own hide rather'n drop Milo! It just don't make sense!"

The crowd mulled over the riddle and Joe Hornby found temporary solace in their silence. Finally one of them spoke, slowly and hesitantly:

"Seldom Seen ain't one tuh kill a man, even in self-defense. Reckon that puts a reasonable doubt on whether he really murdered Orin, huh?"

"You wouldn't be makin' no such brash assertion if Milo was here!" another reminded him.

"Where is Milo?" asked the Window Rock storekeeper.

"Still pokin' around up yonder," sighed the sheriff. "Says he won't give up till he gets his man. Told me it was a smirch on law an' order tuh let a culprit go free."

"Told yuh some other things, too," sniffed one of the posse members. "I heerd him mention something about Window Rock needin' a new sheriff."

"Anybody that craves this job is welcome to it!" blustered Joe Hornby. "And if you boys had any gumption, yuh'd have the say-so, instead o' Milo Ott! Yuh're all just a bunch o' Double-O sheep!"

That was bold talk in the presence of some who were Ott henchmen. There was an uneasy shuffling of feet and the crowd moved out of the sheriff's office.

Joe Hornby closed the door and stretched himself out with a sigh on the dilapidated leather-covered sofa by the window in back of his desk. He closed his eyes and found some satisfaction in the very fact that he had failed to rearrest Seldom Seen Smith. Before long he was noisily snoring.

**B**UT up in the black, blocked tunnel the fugitive was not sleeping. One alarm followed another. He had hardly finished his scrutiny of the ore when a slight sound came from farther back in the tunnel.

Instantly he was on his feet, tense and ready. The sound came again. It was an uneasy stirring. He breathed easier.

The end of the tunnel, forty feet or so back, was pocked with several side drifts, dug by the original prospector as he vainly had sought the ore vein. In previous visits, Seldom Seen had found telltale particles of bone, fur and feathers around these drifts.

"Sorry, Old Man Coyote," he grinned wanly, blowing out the candle. "I hoped you didn't live here anymore. Reckon you're about as worried as me, right now. Anyhow, you're better company than the sheriff or Milo Ott. And now that we're denned together, the main worry for us both is gettin' out. We'll just wait till darkfall."

Guessing when that would be furnished another anxiety. Reckoning time in that Stygian blackness was fraught with uncertainty. The min-

utes seemed like hours. Seldom Seen forced himself to relax. All his strength would be needed for digging free. Possession of the Ott pick helped to make up for his injury and loss of blood. So he sat and rested, his back to the tunnel wall. Ordinarily, relaxation would be easy in that dead silence. But uncertainty was a torment.

He almost welcomed the animal sound when it came again. To fear a cornered coyote never occurred to him. He made no move for the Colt. Never had he feared any animal. That accounted in part for his influence over them. Moreover, many wild animals in this region knew him—by scent—which was their way of acquaintance.

He even felt sympathy for his fellow-captive; and all at once he realized that the coyote, being a nocturnal prowler, would know better than he when night came. It seemed an interminable while before that signal came—a pair of glowing eyes.

He got up then and went to the cavein and started the painful task of burrowing out. He made a passage just large enough to admit his body, along one wall. The loose debris moved easily at first. But as it accumulated, he had to scoop it back with his bare hands and the exertion started his side to bleeding again.

He was forced to stop often. He felt smothered. There was sufficient oxygen. But his laboring lungs was consuming it rapidly.

He had almost forgotten about the coyote when a low growl reminded him of its presence.

"Sorry to disturb your way o' livin', Brother Coyote," Seldom Seen said. "But you don't sound fierce, just uneasy. Anyhow, take it easy. I'm also in the coyote class now. Us coyotes, we gotta stick together."

He continued talking, in a friendly tone, when he went for water. He heard a doglike sniffing. He felt assured that it knew his scent. In the

narrow confines of the tunnel, it slipped past him.

He drank. When he returned to the cavein, the coyote was scratching and digging vigorously.

"Now that's just fine!" said Seldom Seen. "We'll spell each other and we'll get out o' here yet. All coyotes have got to be smart to remain alive."

**A** WHINE answered him—a plaintive, appealing sound. The man felt a thrill in that. The animal understood that they were fellow creatures in distress. For the moment, the barrier of man-fear had dropped.

Seldom Seen did not delude himself with any belief that the coyote understood his words. Wild animals were heedless of words. They did not articulate like the lords of creation. But tones they understood. In the human voice they could sense fear, guile, enmity or honest compassion.

So the small, round tunnel grew. When Seldom Seen edged in, speaking assurance, the coyote withdrew. When he stopped, the coyote dug. Both were driven by the universal instinct to survive.

Dramatically sudden was their return to the living world. The face of the escape hole collapsed. The coyote squirmed out. For a brief moment, Seldom Seen thought it was still daylight. A rising moon bathed the opposite slope with a light that seemed brilliant after the long, utter dark. He worked the opening larger and crawled out and lay awhile on the dump, his lungs devouring the sage-scented outer air, and silently giving thanks for his deliverance.

A shadow slunk close. The man sat up as his coyote friend, a fine specimen of its kind, haunched down and raised its muzzle to the round moon and sent its eerie, high-pitched howl resounding through the canyon loneliness. It circled him then, wagging its bushy tail as would a fond dog, though never close enough for him to touch it.

"Milo Ott put us to this trouble, Brother Coyote," the man told it. "Go collect your supper at his sheep pens."

It went, soundless as a phantom.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Kingdom Unruled*



AWN found Seldom Seen in a high meadow basin, where a small lake glistened like a blue jewel, reflecting the lingering stars. He was wolf-hungry. The Colt would fetch meat. But a gunshot might also betray him to lingering pursuers. He patroled the lake shore, hopeful that ingenuity and luck would produce his breakfast.

He saw a trout exercising its fins in the clear, icy shallows. The fish, too, was searching for breakfast, in a log that lay partly in water where Helgramites bred. Seldom Seen, careful not to alarm the trout, ran a hand along the submerged part of the fallen trunk. He captured a few of the beetle-like crawlers. He tossed one to the hungry trout.

The fish leaped, and the Helgramite was no more. Concealed in a willow clump, Seldom Seen tossed another. With a swirling eddy of its broad tail, the fish rose again, nearer to him. The man repeated this until the fish was lured almost to Seldom Seen's feet.

A lucky throw of a stone and Seldom Seen's breakfast was in his hands. He reached for his pocket knife before he remembered that all such articles were taken from him at the Window Rock jail.

He left the fish on a log to find a sharp-edged rock with which to scale and split it. When he returned, a sly, swift mink was making off with his breakfast.

He dashed for the mink, startled it into dropping the partly devoured trout. He sat on a log and grinned wryly at the lesson. He would not forget that the rule of the wilderness

was that when any denizen left its kill, it became the property of any scavenger.

The matches he had found in the old tunnel were even a more precious possession than the Colt. He built a tiny fire of driftwood that gave off no betraying smoke.

As he feasted a cow elk rose out of a thicket across the lake and went to browsing, followed by an ungainly, knobby-kneed calf. Sustenance was no problem for the elk. Tender grass and rich browsing growth were abundant. Why, wondered the watching man, did mysterious Providence make existence so convenient for some creatures and a problem of killing for others?"

He pondered on this riddle of the philosophers as he made for a berry thicket where a spring creek entered the lake. He reached to pluck ripe, juicy berries and was startled by a heavy commotion.

A huge black bear reared suddenly before him.

Seldom Seen backed away cautiously. The bear had first claim on the berry patch. It settled on all fours and with a grunt went to eating again. This time the man was the scavenger, waiting to eat what the more formidable creature left.

**I**T WAS not that he feared the bear. He simply knew that to survive he must obey the intricate rules of brute existence. Civilization called him outlaw. His neighbors of the animal world could lay no such charge against him. He would fit himself into this primitive scheme of life without being an intruder and plunderer.

As the day grew his minor adventures continued and in each there was a lesson. A fat blue grouse waddled to the creek to drink. Here was uncontested prey that he could justly claim. He killed it with a stick. Secure in the possession of his next meal, he found a warm, sun-bathed ledge and slept.

He survived in such fashion until seven notches carved with his stone knife in a stick marked the passing of a week. In the little lake basin he snared fish and small game. To save his match supply he hoarded a bed of live embers in a deep rock crevice where the little smoke dissipated through a crevice that made a natural flue. In this time his rib wound healed.

The animals that roved there grew fearless of his presence.

Even the fiercest of the species were not considered menaces. They were, instead, a constant protection. With keener senses than his, they would give alarm should Sheriff Joe Hornby or other manhunters come that way.

With his lot cast so completely with them, Seldom Seen widened his understanding of the voices of the wilderness. Even the bark of a pine squirrel, senseless chatter to the uninitiated, had many inflections and meanings. The scolding of the jays, the strident scream of a high-circling eagle, the sharp yip of a gray fox—all these sounds blended into a natural and universal language.

It was a language man had forgotten through the dim centuries. Seldom Seen's senses became sharper. His spirit expanded as the dulling habits of civilized life left him. He exulted in a sense of mastery over his environment.

Fantastic were his long, undisturbed musings. Seldom Seen dreamed of ruling this wilderness kingdom and making war on humankind. Guided by his superior intelligence, the wild creatures could become an overwhelming alliance that would avenge him and them.

Even a timid deer, with its sharp antlers and hoofs, could ambush and destroy a man. The birds could scout, the insects could devour, the clan of tooth and claw could become a striking force that would annihilate settlers and drive back the frontiers of a civilization that in moments of re-

sentment the man loathed and scorned.

These were not wholesome thoughts. To come was another lesson to teach him that animals fought not wantonly or for vengeance but out of grim necessity.

**U**NDER a late, waning moon a voice greater than all others laid a dread hush over the lake basin. It was the bloodthirsty cry of a roving cougar, declaring his ruthless, gory purpose.

At daybreak came the attack. The cougar sprang for the frisking elk calf.

The cow elk bawled. The sound was both challenge and a distress summons. It brought a lordly-antlered bull elk that Seldom Seen had not hitherto glimpsed.

It crashed bristling onto the scene and there ensued a combat such as few humans ever had witnessed. The vague, tawny form of the cougar returned for sheltering rocks. The bull elk, with red rage in its eyes, cut off that retreat.

The cougar snarled, circled and leaped. A crimson claw rip bloomed along the bull elk's dark neck. A dip and sweep of wide antlers gored the giant cat's flank. It screeched, squirmed free and attacked again, a fanged fury.

Death would have been the only arbiter in such a struggle as this. But now came man and his urge to subdue harsh, unmerciful destruction. Man alone knew mercy. That made him superior, though there were in his own species individuals like Milo Ott who lacked that gentle quality.

So Seldom Seen rushed into the battle. He blasted a shot into the ripped and bloodied ground to separate the combatants. The cougar seized the opportunity to make a limping escape. The bull elk, still full of fight, shook blood from its claw slashes and faced what he thought was a new antagonist.

Now Seldom Seen used that magic instrument, the human voice.

"You handled your job," he said. "It's over now, old-timer. Call it quits. Hunt the shade and heal up those claw rips."

He kept talking. The elk's upstanding hackle slowly flattened. It gave a throaty rumble. It pawed and stood its ground but its fight rage abated and presently it turned, followed the willow-fringed shore and vanished under the trees.

The experience swelled Seldom Seen's sense of power to meet and



triumph over any circumstance. But a spell had been broken by the gunshot. The mountain was a mammoth sounding board, sending resounding echoes. That evening a new and apprehensive note was in the myriad voices of the wilderness. The cow elk and her calf did not come out to feed. The black bear did not visit the berry patch. The jays ceased their squabbling. Nature's community was in a waiting, listening mood.

**S**O SELDOM SEEN was forewarned when at dusk a red horse slipped into view where the timber gave way to the lake meadow. The rider, dismounting and shielding himself behind it, scanned the scene across a carbine rested in the seat of his saddle. The frog chorus in the boggy shallows chopped off into silence. A hen mallard bunched her brood deep under overhanging reeds.

Milo Ott's hoarse, coarse shout broke the ominous stillness:

"Show yoreself like a man, yuh skulker! I know yuh're here!"

How did he know? Seldom Seen

soon knew. Over where Ott had dismounted lay grouse feathers, where he had dressed a yesterday's kill. The grouse he had skinned out. It was a man-kill. Ott had shrewdly perceived that.

"Come out, Smith!" Ott yelled again. "Only one of us comes down offen this mountain! No tunnel for yuh tuh hole up in here!"

So Ott had learned the ruse of his getaway. He had a new and increased purpose in ending the life of the one man who knew the secret of the old mine. A secret that gave meaning to Ott's determination, explained the risks he had taken.

Seldom Seen lay flat on a mossy ledge by the spring creek. His Colt was cocked and ready but the light was failing and his enemy was beyond Colt range. If he showed himself, the carbine would have all the advantage.

There was more to it than that. Milo Ott had to stay alive or Seldom Seen would never be clear of the murder charge.

So Seldom Seen bided his time, though he longed for revenge. He waited for star-dark. He had to take Milo Ott alive.

Ott taunted him with curses. When they failed to goad the hunted man into action, he hobbled the red horse, Indian-fashion, one hind shank snugly tied to its macarty rope so that it could graze but not raise its head to run and elude him.

"Two can play the waitin' game!" rasped Ott, settling down for a long and dragging vigil.

Secure on the mossy ledge, Seldom Seen slept. The stars had marched far across the sky when he awakened, fresh and ready, knowing the ordeal of waiting had dulled Ott.

It was time to start his stalk, before dawn dew wetted the meadow grass, leaving sign of his trail. Small sounds of the grazing red horse guided him in the direction where he knew Ott to be, guarding the exit from the lake basin.

## CHAPTER V

*Strange Justice*

**F**THERE existed such a force as divine compensation, it transpired now with shocking suddenness. Seldom Seen froze as a scream cut the darkness. A threshing sound, and another scream shrill with terror, was followed by a gunshot.

Seldom Seen understood. The wounded cougar, trying to slink from the lake basin, had encountered the waiting man and attacked.

Seldom Seen went forward without delay. A confusion of sound told him that the great cat was mauling its victim. He routed the animal with shots and propped Milo Ott against a tree.

Ott was a ghastly spectacle. His leather jacket was ripped to the bare, quivering flesh.

"I'm bleedin' dry!" he babbled. "Help me!"

"On one condition," Seldom Seen said tersely. "Talk."

Milo Ott knew instantly what that meant. His response would have mystified any listener.

"Orin walked intuh it!" he croaked desperately.

"Orin didn't walk backwards. He got a bullet in the back while we faced each other."

Milo Ott groaned. His head rolled helplessly from side to side.

"I'll tell old Trask it was an accident," he proposed. "I'll say my brother come in between us when me and you was havin' it out, and that one of us shot him!"

Seldom Seen didn't bother to answer. Ott waited, then went into new panic.

"My say-so is the only thing that'll ever clear you!" he bawled.

"And you'll be dead inside an hour if I don't twist a bandage around that ripped artery in your arm."

Ott's head drooped.

"Fix me up!" he gasped weakly. "Take me in. It was on—on account o' the gold I done it! I'll tell, Smith! For God's sake, help me!"

Seldom Seen moved fast and expertly now. A smear of dawn was in the sky as he made down through the timber, leading the red horse, with the bandaged Ott swaying in saddle.

It was still early when they reached the foothills. As the daylight expanded, Seldom Seen noticed that the storm weather, which had loomed threateningly for days, was coming to a head with black, rolling thunder clouds.

"Stop!" begged Ott, on the verge of collapse. "I can't go no farther! I got tuh rest!"

Seldom Seen scanned the sky. Already a dark curtain of rain, a cloud-burst, was pounding down at the head of the cross-canyon.

"Hang on!" he ordered tersely. "Hang on if you want to reach the doc at Window Rock!"

"Leave me here! Bring the doc!"

The first shallow onrush of a flood was spreading over the cross-canyon floor. A big, warm raindrop spattered Seldom Seen's bare forehead. He hurried his stride.

"We're crossing that, while there's time," he declared.

**I**TT swore helplessly as Seldom Seen led the red horse down a steep bank and into the sandy bottom. The muddy current swirled around his knees. As he waded out, it rose to his thighs, to his waist. He clung to a stirrup now to keep his feet as the red horse struggled gallantly across. Up the canyon, a foamy wall of water rolled towards them, crested with debris.

"We can't make it!" Ott cried wildly. "We'll drown like rats!"

He kicked at Seldom Seen's face. He grabbed for the saddle gun. Seldom Seen jerked it from him, flung it into the brown, racing water. He was

soaked now by deluging rain. It seethed like angry serpents on the flood waters. That battering wall was almost on them. The red horse slipped, struggled, recovered its footing and floundered on.

A shout came from the bank. It was almost blotted out by the turmoil. Seldom Seen barely heard, feared it was hallucination born of this crowded crisis. It came again. Through the murk ahead he saw the stodgy figure of Sheriff Joe Hornby racing down to the water's edge. He was whirling a lariat!

He made his throw. The rope snaked out and dropped tantalizingly, just out of reach. It was no time for indecision. Seldom Seen let go of the stirrup and flung himself for the loop. His fingers closed on it as it sank beneath the muddy foam.

He was helpless prey to the current now, at least until the rope tightened on the sheriff's saddle horn. But the red horse, freed of his weight, swiftly gained the bank—and safety.

Milo Ott saw his chance and took it. He heeled the animal into a scrambling climb, up out of the canyon, toward the sage slope beyond.

Seldom Seen shouted at the sheriff, but his words were lost in the booming roar as the flood crest bore down. The rope jerked tight, as the sheriff backed his horse. Seldom Seen floundered out as logs and grinding boulders boomed past. Death had missed him by inches.

"Get Ott!" Seldom Seen panted. "Stop him!"

The sheriff was hauling in his rope. "What for?" he shouted.

"He's your killer! Milo shot his own brother! Get him, make him talk!"

The sheriff's fat but capable hands continued to loop his throw. Seldom Seen jerked the Colt from his belt and thrust it up at him. Joe Hornby made no move to take it.

"Keep yore shirt on, young feller," he blinked. "Can't yuh see Milo is

downright provin' his guilt by shaggin' off thisaway?"

Seldom Seen felt as though he had been struck by a lightning bolt. Joe Hornby grinned and tied his rope to his saddle swell.

"Yessir, Milo's twice as onery as Orin ever was. But s'pose yuh talk up, Seldom Seen, and tell me exactly what happened that day when you and Orin Ott tangled horns."

**C**OULD this be the law talking—the law he had flouted and despised . . .

Seldom Seen forgot the storm, forgot his narrow escape. He felt numb, insensible to anything but surging, joyous hope.

"I came to lambast Orin," he said. "I invited him to peel and fight, like a man. It was on the creek pasture, back of the Double-O home spread. Then I heard a shot, there in the creek willows. Orin dropped. I'd already shed my gun. Out rode Milo. He covered me. You know the rest, how he turned me in and—"

Joe Hornby nodded owlishly.

"That tallies," he rumbled. "But here's two important facts you ain't onto yet, on account o' streakin' out like yuh done, yuh young chucklehead."

"First, Santos, that Basco sheep-herder of Ott's, he come in and told me that Orin and Milo had been quarrelin' somethin' fierce just before Orin got killed. Said he'd overheerd part of the argyment, which was about a gold mine."

"Milo's motive!" Seldom Seen yelled it.

"That's right. So I went to Judge Trask, told him what old Santos said. He dug up that mineral filing. We put two an' two together, then I lit out after Milo this mornin'."

"And now you're letting Milo escape!"

"He's in no shape tuh git far, it looked like. Anyhow, I'm busy. Got tuh take you in, Seldom Seen."

The ice and firelight shone in the other's blue eyes.

"I've had my fill of Window Rock justice," he said, suddenly bitter.

"Not yet yuh ain't. This is law an' motion day in Judge Trask's court. Got tuh git that charge ag'in you dismissed, don't we, before I haul in Milo Ott?"

Seldom Seen did not feel the sting of the rain on his face. He felt nothing but a surging, joyous clamor in his own bosom. That and an overwhelming gratitude to Sheriff Joe Hornby. He felt that he could fly across the sageland to the town he had fled as an outcast. But more practical locomotion made unexpected appearance just then.

THE red horse was nimbly descending the canyon slope. It was returning, riderless. Coming straight for him. Seldom Seen ran to meet it. Up near the crest he sighted the limp, fallen figure of a man who would never live to hang.

He was still conscious when Seldom Seen and the sheriff reached him. He had barely a flicker of strength left

in him—enough for a strained, husky whisper.

"Orin . . . skunk!" Joe Hornby bent close, to get every rasped, disconnected word. "Aimed tuh crook me . . . own brother, equal partner! Sure, I learned him! I—I done it! The gold. . . ."

Milo Ott choked on that word. He shuddered and went limp. Rain dribbled off his ghastly, staring face. Seldom Seen straightened and grasped the red's reins.

The rain was passing. Sunlight rifted through the low, muttering clouds. With that sound came a high, faraway cry, out of the wilderness.

It was the loneliest, weirdest cry of the solitude—the howl of a coyote, doleful yet exultant.

"Brother Coyote knows," declared Seldom Seen Smith.

Sheriff Joe Hornby looked up at him and wagged his head despairingly, incomprehendingly.

"You say the gosh-darnedest things," he decided. Then he pushed briskly to his feet. "C'mon, let's hustle. And git tuh court before it adjourns."

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# De Gaulle for Dakar

By CHARLES STODDARD

*Author of "Waters of Death," "The Devil's Glacier," etc.*

**Sent to Free France on a Perilous Rescue Mission, Captain Bill Wesson Finds Himself in a Desperate Fight for Life!**

THE Harmattan wind, that blew in scorchingly from the distant Sahara, fanned Captain Bill Wesson like the blast from a furnace as he sweated up the roadway from Dakar harbor. He paused, mopped his streaming face, shot a swift glance backwards. He knew from the moment he left the breakwater that he was followed.

Wesson had expected something like that. At the Customs, Hun-ridden French officials had looked with ill-concealed suspicion at the entry of his steamer, the U. S. freighter *Geronimo*. Despite the brilliance of the African sunshine, a thick cloud of gloom and despondency hung over Dakar.

There was grim purpose in Wes-

son's face, as he moved along the dusty roadway, lined by deserted saloons and destitute trade stores, and reached the market square. In an effort to shake off his trailer, he elbowed his way through a motley crowd of Senegalese, Arab, Syrian and Moorish traders, and made for the gilt sign of the *Café Paris*.

The *café*'s single customer, a French officer, looked up furtively at Wesson's entrance.

Wesson gazed appraisingly at the white-coated Senegalese who brought his bock, then shot him a question in undertone.

"Captain Boyle—is he here?"

The boy opened his mouth to speak, then closed it hurriedly. He shot Wesson a warning glance, and hurried away.

A man in white drill suit and topee entered, and angled toward Wesson's table. Wesson knew him instantly as the man who had trailed him from the breakwater.

"A stranger, I think?" the stranger asked, bowing with a flourish and taking a seat. "An American, no doubt, from the steamer *Geronimo*?"

He removed the topee from his blond, closely-cropped head. His heavy, red face wreathed into an insinuating smile which was discounted by the hardness of his fat-lidded eyes.

"An American, all right," Wesson admitted coldly. There was something about this fellow that convinced Wesson he would not be easily shaken off. But he must get rid of him, somehow. "Are you paid to follow Americans around, Mister? I saw you trail me from the harbor!"

The man continued to smile blandly. "I'm interested in them. And I happen to know America very well. Your name, please?"

Wesson leaped to his feet angrily. "Listen, Mister, if you knew it from Maine to California, it would leave me cold!"

He got no further, for the other

was on his feet also. And now the smile was gone from his face. His thick lips were pursed grimly, and there was a frigid menace in his eyes. Wesson saw that one thick hand rested on a pistol-butt beneath his tunic-like jacket.

Wesson looked swiftly around the *café*. The bartender had disappeared; the French officer rose and left the place hurriedly. Wesson's inquisitor, putting aside all pretense, drew his gun.

"There is a room behind you, my friend!" he intoned. "We'll go in there and talk. Turn around, and walk ahead of me!"

**W**ESSON'S brain raced. This was one man with a gun. But behind that door might be others.

"Listen, Mister, maybe I've got you wrong. Maybe you're a police officer. I think you are." Wesson grinned while the blood pounded in his head. "I'm the captain of the *Geronimo* and I've got something aboard that might interest you. Why not sit down here and talk?"

He slid to his seat again. For a moment the other looked at him suspiciously, then sat down on the opposite side of the table.

"First of all, what's your name?" he asked.

Wesson gently pushed aside the beer bottle that stood in front of him, and bent confidentially across the table.

"Walker," he murmured gently. "But if we're going to talk, I'll want some proof of your official standing."

"We'll come to that in good time, my friend. First of all, we'll have your name, and some information on the business that brings you to Dakar. When we've made a note of that, we'll go aboard your steamer and check up on it!" One hand was groping in a pocket as he spoke, and for a fleeting instant his eyes were off Wesson.

In that split second Wesson acted.

Grabbing the bottle, he whipped it against the stranger's head. The sharp blow tipped the man backward in his chair. Wesson launched himself across the table, drove a smashing blow to the fleshy chin that choked a startled outcry.

The man sagged in his chair, then toppled to the floor as Wesson charged around the table and blasted him again with welt-knuckled fists. Moving swiftly, Wesson took the gun and threw open the door of the adjoining room. It was roughly furnished and empty.

He dragged the unconscious man inside, stripped him of the drill jacket, which he tore into strips. With these and his belt, he gagged the man tightly and bound his hands and feet. He locked the door with a key that stood in the lock, and returned to the bar.

The bartender came from an inner room, leaned across the counter and spoke in an agitated whisper.

"You go—go quick!" he breathed. "But Captain Boyle? Where is he?"

"Go quick! Go for Café Jean, and speak Marmadu Ali!" The barman added some hurried directions, then disappeared again.

Wesson left the place unhurriedly. On the sidewalk stood the French officer, who fell into step beside him.

"Monsieur," he said in a low voice, "you are a brave man, but foolhardy! I saw it all—and you would be wise to leave here, at once!"

Wesson shot him an appraising glance. "Yes? But suppose I have business here?"

"*M'sieu*, you are an American, I think—and a friend of France. If you had business here, it is finished. That man is an agent of the Gestapo!" The Frenchman saluted gravely, then turned on his heel.

Wesson watched him go, and moved off in the direction of the Café Jean. Avoiding the publicity of the awninged sidewalk, he took a seat inside the café. The beer he ordered was

lukewarm and was brought by a smart-looking Senegalese.

"Marmadu Ali?" Wesson asked idly.

"*Je suis Marmadu Ali.*" The husky native gave him a sharp look.

Wesson grinned. "Speak English, we'll get on better." Then, lowering his voice, he added. "I want to see Captain Boyle!"

The broad, ebony face immediately became blank. "Don't know nobody that name, *M'sieu!*"

Wesson snapped: "Don't waste time. I was sent here from the Café Paris. I'm Captain Wesson of the *Geronimo*. Tell Captain Boyle I'm here!"

Wooden-faced, the native walked away. Wesson watched him drift over to a turbaned Arab, who sat drinking coffee. The Arab sat for a few moments, fingering his black beard and glancing furtively around. Then he rose and walked slowly over to Wesson.

"You wan' see Captain Boyle?" he asked. "I tak you to heem!"

**W**ESSON rose instantly and followed him. The way led through the bar into a dark passage, then up a long stairway to a room that seemed to be over the bar. As the door closed, Wesson saw that Marmadu Ali had sneaked behind him and was now in the room. But what was more startling was that the Arab had him covered with an automatic.

"If you're Captain Wesson, you'll know I can't afford to take chances," he said, in perfectly good English. "If you're *not* Wesson, you're taking some chances yourself!"

His eyes bored into Wesson, and his mouth went into a grim line beneath the black beard.

Wesson grinned. "You're pretty good, if you're Boyle! And just keep that gun under control while I get to a pocket!"

Delving in one of his pockets, he brought out a copy of a ship's clear-

ance. Boyle looked at it, and his face relaxed.

"So you cleared last from Freetown, Sierra Leone?" he asked.

"Yes. That's where I contacted the Intelligence officer, who asked me to slip in here and pick you up!" Then he grinned again. "But how about you? How am I to know you are Boyle in that rig?"

Boyle's face was grave. "You'll have to take me on trust, I'm afraid—Aloysius Boyle, late of the U. S. Marines. A fellow doesn't carry his identification tag around here, Wesson. Dakar's just lousy with German agents.

"I had to quit the *Café Paris* on account of it getting too hot around there!"

Wesson nodded and told him of his encounter there.

Boyle looked grave. "That would be Rheindorf, the most dangerous of the lot, Wesson. You'd better get out again."

There was a resolute glint in Wesson's gray eyes. The lines of his firm, square-jawed face hardened.

"Not without you!" he said with finality. "And there was a Frenchman mentioned—Colonel Gerard. I was to take him, too, if you thought it advisable, and he was in any danger. Where is he?"

Boyle lighted a cigarette which he drew on thoughtfully for a moment or two.

"That's the trouble, Wesson," he said. "Listen! He and I have worked together for months. I was sent to help him because I know a number of native languages, including Arabic. Gerard's master of them all, and he's got a remarkable memory. He has a mental list of every officer and man who is a de Gaulle sympathizer, and who is reliable. If either Uncle Sam or the British think of taking this place over in the name of the Free French—and they're damned fools if they don't—Gerard would be invaluable. I'm not leaving without him,

Wesson, but Gerard was arrested yesterday!"

Wesson sat silent for a few moments, then reached for a pencil and paper and rapidly scribbled a note.

"Listen, Boyle," he stated when he had finished. "I'm staying with you to see this through. The dickens with the Gestapo! That note's to my mate, telling him to pull out right away, and stand fifty miles off shore; then to run in within ten miles of the harbor every night for the next three or four nights, showing a small signal light in case we want him. Can you send a messenger to the *Geronimo* with the note?"

Boyle took the missive but stood hesitating. "Think what you're doing, Wesson," he said gravely. "If they get hold of me, they'll put me in front of a firing squad. If you're with me, they'll do the same with you. There'll be no use appealing to a U. S. consul."

Captain Bill Wesson's jaw was out at a prominent angle.

"I told you," he replied harshly, "I'm in this to the finish—for Uncle Sam!"

**B**OYLE led Wesson to the open window of the room. There was a tension in his voice and manner he couldn't hide.

"There are two reasons why I chose this hideout," he said. "One is that the *café* belongs to Marmadu Ali who is reliable and devoted to Gerard. He served with him as a sergeant in the Senegalese infantry. The other reason is that they're holding Gerard in that building over there. It used to be a residence for minor government officials, but since the coming of the Gestapo the ordinary jail's been overcrowded, and they're using that place for political prisoners."

Across the street Wesson saw a high, flat-roofed building, surrounded by a twelve-foot concrete wall of apparently recent construction. Two sentries patrolled the inside of the courtyard.

"What chance is there of getting Gerard out of there?" asked Wesson.

"Marmadu and I have worked out a plan which we've managed to communicate with Gerard," said Boyle. "Marmadu has a cousin who's a sergeant and sympathetic. Tomorrow night, in notation of duty, he should be sergeant of the guard over there and will pick his men. The guard mounts an hour before sunset. For half an hour before sunset Gerard will be allowed in the yard for exercise under the eyes of the sentries. You know how fast it gets dark here. Gerard is to rush the sentry at the gate just before dark. There'll be a big racket and a lot of shooting—in the wrong direction. After that it'll be up to us!"

"A bit crude," commented Wesson. "But it may work. There's a boom across the harbor entrance after nightfall. Is there any chance of getting away by surfboat or canoe from one of the beaches outside the town?"

"I'm afraid not. All approaches to the town are too well guarded, day and night. But we might get a light canoe, that would be easily handled, planted inside the harbor near the boom. I'll see Marmadu about it now. That's the window of Gerard's room—first from the right on the top floor. I've been able to signal him a couple of times, so watch out for him until I come back."

Bill Wesson sat watching the window, and speculating. He thought of his owners, and the perils to which he exposed their ship. Bill Wesson had entered this grim drama with his eyes open to the risks he ran, but his owners had very deliberately closed theirs. He thanked God they were the kind who didn't always think in dollars, cents and dividends.

They realized the terrible potentialities of the war, its threat to Western civilization, and all that made the American way of life worthwhile. And in the veins of Bill Wesson ran the blood of generations of shipmasters who had fought to make the

seas free and open to all men. Against this threat to the freedom of the seas, the blood of Bill Wesson and his ancestors rose in revolt.

Should Dakar, this grim fortress on Cape Verde, that overlooked the bottle-neck of the Atlantic, fall completely under Hun domination, that freedom would be gone. And with its loss would come a deadly menace to the welfare of the Americas.

Boyle and Gerard were important pawns in this game—too important to be left in Nazi hands. Boyle's plan might be successful, or it might not. Captain Bill Wesson of the *Geronimo* had been in tight jams before. Somehow he would get these two men out of Dakar, and take them to where their knowledge could be used to the utmost effect.

But where was Boyle? He seemed to have been gone an unreasonable length of time. Wesson rose and paced the room impatiently.

Then, from the café below, came the noise of a shot and a rush of feet. Wesson tensed. He gripped the pistol he had taken from the German. But the noise subsided. Guardedly, he looked through the window.

**A** SMALL squad of French troops were drawn up in the roadway. As Wesson watched, they were joined by two more, followed by an officer. And between the two last troopers walked Boyle, handcuffed. Wesson drew back into the shadows. The squad moved off sharply in the direction of the prison.

Bill Wesson's face hardened. His problem was now intensified. And Boyle had said that this would mean a firing squad for him. How much time would he, Bill Wesson, have to formulate a desperate scheme for the rescue of both Boyle and Gerard before they went to their deaths?

Into the room burst Marmadu Ali, his face working in agitation.

"Captain Boyle—he is arrested, *m'sieu!*"

"I know it!" Wesson answered grimly. "I saw them march him away. It's up to you and me now, Marmadu! Boyle told me of your plan for the colonel. It may work for both of them. But we must think!"

And with Marmadu Ali he went minutely into the details of the plan that Boyle had laid. . . .

Through the stifling heat of the tropic night, Wesson had slept fitfully in the small room. Bathed in sweat, he rose quickly with the false dawn to await the coming of daylight and Marmadu Ali. And when the native did come he brought crushing news.

"*M'sieu*, it is all found out! My cousin, he is arrested!"

Staggered, Wesson shot him a rapid flow of questions. A soldier, one of the sergeant's men, had got drunk and talked. The sergeant had been arrested, placed under guard, and a new guard made up of Algerians detailed to take over.

"These men, *m'sieu*, will shoot to kill. How can we warn *M'sieu* Boyle, and the colonel? They must not try to get away tonight!"

How to warn them, indeed! No doubt this guard would be picked men, instructed to shoot at the slightest pretext. Perhaps, even without one, once the prisoners were in the courtyard. That would be quite in line with Nazi practice. It would rid these Gestapo men of Gerard, a dangerous opponent, without the delay of a court-martial, and the possibility of an acquittal by his French colleagues. The prisoners must be warned at any cost!

"Do you know any of the men on guard now, Marmadu?" asked Wesson. "Is it possible for anybody to get past the guard?"

"Only one in uniform, on duty, or with a permit. And I know none of them, *M'sieu*!"

Uniform? The words started a train of thought in Wesson's mind. He pursued it a few moments, and his fertile brain evolved a daring scheme.

"You used to be a sergeant, Marmadu," he said. "Could you get a sergeant's uniform?"

"I have my old one, *m'sieu*. I was a sergeant up to six months ago."

"Good! And do you think you could get an officer's uniform for me?"

A gleam of comprehension shone in the intelligent eyes of the Senegalese. "It might be done, *m'sieu*. There are men amongst the soldiers who will do anything for money. But it will be death for you, *m'sieu*, if you are caught!"

"Never mind that. Get me one. Fast! There is no time to lose!"

**M**ARMADU took the French currency notes that Wesson handed him, and left quickly. In an hour he returned with a bundle that contained the sky-blue uniform of a French major. Wesson tried it on and found it fitted him passably. Then he carefully outlined to Marmadu the plan he had formed.

"But first," he concluded, "we must get warning to them—keep them from trying to make a break at sunset. You say the colonel understands English, and the semaphore?"

"Perfectly, *m'sieu*!"

"Then I hope he sees me. If not, you'll have to, somehow, get past the gate before sunset, and that might spoil the rest of the plan!"

Then Wesson ambled down to the little café, and chose a seat near the open front. For hours he sat through the sweltering heat, eyes glued upon the window opposite, hoping desperately for a glimpse of Boyle or Gerard. He stared out across the red dust of the street, until his eyeballs ached from the intensity of the tropic sunshine. The street was in a quiet quarter, with little traffic, save an odd native who shuffled aimlessly by, or an occasional despondent-looking French trooper.

Noontime came, with a little desultory patronage from the café. Later, Wesson moved to a table on the awn-

inged sidewalk. It was risky, but perhaps Gerard or Boyle might better see him there from the dark recesses of their rooms. Marmadu brought him a light meal, then placed a bottle of fiery Calvados at his elbow.

The afternoon dragged on. Wesson's eyes were swollen from lack of sleep, and the heat. He pushed back the hair that streams of sweat had brought down dankly upon his forehead.

There was still an hour to go before sunset. He poured himself a drink of the Calvados. As he put down the bottle, he tensed suddenly. Two men were approaching the café. One was in *gendarme*'s uniform, the other was Rheindorf, the Gestapo agent.

One hand shot to the pistol in Wesson's pocket. But he withdrew it just as quickly when he saw he could neither shoot nor run. For, Rheindorf was approaching quickly, and at that moment a figure had appeared at Gerard's window!

Wesson's brain functioned with the speed of light. He made a swift, signaling motion which he hoped Gerard saw. Then he seized the bottle, raised it to his lips as though drinking greedily. As he lowered the bottle, his arm swept the glass from the table, and he lurched drunkenly to save it.

Rheindorf reached the table, glaring savagely, a gun in his hand. Wesson had fallen, was hoisting himself drunkenly from the floor. He got unsteadily to his feet, grabbed the bottle again.

His swollen eyes, dishevelled hair and clothing, gave him the appearance of a man at the height of a drunken spree.

He stood swaying, holding out the bottle.

"Well, well!" he said, leering drunkenly at Rheindorf. "If it isn't my li'l ol' pal the cop! Have a li'l drink, ol' sport, and let bygones be bygones!"

But the *gendarme* swiftly snatched the bottle from him. Rheindorf's

teeth bared in a vicious grin, and he held the gun threateningly.

"So I've got you again, my American captain!" he snarled. He looked Wesson over from head to foot. "Drunken *schwein*!" he spat.

Wesson was beaming like an alcohol-sodden bum, weaving on his feet.

"Lesh be happy!" he drooled. "I wanna dance!"

"Dance, you *schwein*! I'll make you dance!"

Rheindorf's eyes were suffused with blood. For a moment it looked as though he would pistol Wesson where he stood. But he seemed to think better of it, and his mood turned to one of bullying savagery. He swung his pistol downward, aiming at Wesson's feet. His gun roared, and the bullets struck the pavement within inches of Wesson's feet. Wesson swayed, and grinned at him drunkenly.

"Good ol' time stuff! Now I'll dansh the sailor's hornpipe!"

**C**ROONING in maudlin fashion, he broke into an unsteady jig. He was facing the road as he warmed up to it, chanting drunkenly, lurching backward and forward, and his arms swinging in a queer, jerky, clockwise movement.

Rheindorf and the *gendarme* stood watching him in disgust. But beneath drooping eyelids. Wesson could see the Frenchman at the window opposite, keenly watching his crazy antics. He twisted about drunkenly, his arms working like a puppet's, until he thought he saw a faint signal of comprehension from across the way. Then he spun around like a dancing dervish, and held out a hand for the bottle.

"Wanna drink!" he croaked. "Gimme li'l drink!"

Grinning amusedly, the *gendarme* passed him the bottle. Somebody had fooled themselves, all right. This drunken bum was no dangerous spy. Another shot from that bottle, and he'd be too far gone to resist.

Wesson grabbed the bottle, raised

it greedily to his lips. Then he lurched, slid sideways against the table, and fell to the floor. He lay there, muttering incoherently.

Rheindorf spat in disgust, turned to the gendarme and spoke in French.

"Get a wagon, and take the sot in! There's been a mistake somewhere. I think—he's just a drunken fool!"

**R**HEINDORF spun on his heel and marched away. For a moment the gendarme stood looking down at Wesson, then Marmadu appeared, and handed him a drink.

"Let us take him inside, *m'sieu*, while you wait for the *voiture*. This is not good for business!"

Together they carried Wesson through the *café* up the stairs, and threw him on the bed. The gendarme turned, and Wesson shot from the bed like a striking snake. Steel fingers circled the man's throat, stifling his outcry. He was borne backward as Wesson's free hand jerked the pistol from his holster.

The struggle was brief. Marmadu came forward with a scarf, and they swiftly bound and gagged him, thrusting him behind the locked door of another room.

The notes of a bugle suddenly broke the silence.

"Just in time, *m'sieu*. It is the call for the guard!" said Marmadu Ali. "And the colonel, he understood your message—those semaphore signals as you danced. *M'sieu*, that was clever!"

Wesson grinned faintly. "I think he got it, all right. But now for the rest of the job! There's not much time left. Did you get pistols?"

"Two, *m'sieu*. One for the colonel and one for *M'sieu Boyle*!"

"Good. Let's hope they live to use them!"

An hour later, the clean-shaven, sinewy man who filled a French major's uniform showed small resemblance to the drunken sailor. It was dark when Wesson and Marmadu Ali, both in uniform, left the *café* by the rear exit.

As they walked briskly toward the prison, Wesson realized to the full the risks he ran. He was impersonating a French field officer, and knew nothing of the French language, or military procedure. One slip, in that uniform, would bring him before a firing squad. There could be no appeal to anyone, and even Uncle Sam could not help him.

The sentry at the gate sprang smartly to attention at sight of the uniform. Then Marmadu, marching a pace ahead of him, entered the guardroom and barked an order. A sergeant and six men were there, loafing and partly dressed.

The unexpected appearance of an officer threw them into confusion. They grabbed for equipment, which they donned hastily, adjusting straps and buttons with fumbling fingers. When they were dressed, he barked another command. They fell in, and stood woodenly at attention with bayoneted rifles at the slope.

**UNSEEN**, Marmadu reached for a bunch of keys that hung from the wall behind them. He saluted stiffly, and went out. Then came Wesson's ordeal, previously coached by Marmadu, of inspecting the guard.

He would much rather have gone with Marmadu to free Boyle and Gerard, and deal with the other two sentries in the courtyard. But in the part he was playing, it was imperative that he remain here to hold the attention of the guard until Marmadu had accomplished his task. Slowly he began his inspection, minutely examining each article of clothing and equipment.

The heat in the bare room was stifling. It was a room apparently used for the temporary housing of prisoners, for there was a bar and lock on the outer side of the door. The sweat poured down Wesson's face as he strove to assume an appearance of nonchalance, and slowly passed from man to man. He dared not open his

mouth, for he knew not one word of French that would pass muster here.

He came to the end of the line and paused. The soldiers stood like ebony images, staring straight ahead, not moving a muscle. But how long could he keep them standing there? Discipline notwithstanding, they would soon become suspicious if kept standing there indefinitely by an officer who was a complete stranger to them.

What could he do next? The minutes were dragging along with agonizing slowness. No sound issued from the courtyard, save the distant and regular tramping of the sentries' feet. Wesson faced the guard, frowned heavily, and began the inspection all over again.

He strained his ears as he went, hoping for a sound that would indicate the coming of Marmadu and the others. His pulses were pounding. The muscles in his stomach were churning into knots. And when he reached the end of the line again, he felt his heart turn over at sight of the cold suspicion mirrored in the sergeant's eyes.

Wesson stood before the guard, now certain he could keep up the farce no longer. The sergeant moved uneasily, opened his mouth to speak.

"*M'sieu*—"

"Silence!" Wesson raised a hand imperatively, shouted the word he hoped might pass for French.

Abruptly, then, the thunder of shots and wild yelling drifted in from the courtyard.

Instantly the sergeant stepped forward in a move that would have placed him between Wesson and the door. But Wesson drove a lightning blow to that black face. The man reeled back among the others. Bedlam broke loose as Wesson slid from the room. He swung the door shut and dropped the bar into place.

The action he had been seeking came swiftly. He saw the white eyeballs of the sentry from the gate, glaring at him through the darkness.

With lowered bayonet, the man rushed at him.

Wesson saw the glint of starlight upon the long, slender blade. His gun was out, and his sinewy body was leaping aside as the sentry lunged. The man wheeled, ready to charge again. Eyes glinting, blood racing with the call of action, Wesson smashed the heavy pistol against the thick, black skull. The man went down with a coughing grunt, and Wesson hopped over him.

The men in the guardroom were shouting wildly, splintering the door with their rifles. Another gun boomed and Wesson heard the beat of running feet. He stood beside the gateway as Boyle and Gerard shot through, followed by Marmadu.

Wesson joined them as they ran. "Down to the harbor!" he hissed. "Separate as we go!"

**H**E HEARD the guardroom door crash. Wild shouting and the bellow of gunfire thundered in their wake as he and Marmadu rounded the corner of the dark lane that led behind the *Café Jean*. Boyle and Gerard were ahead of them, somewhere in the darkness.

Through narrow, dark alleys, with only the starlight to guide them, they came to the wharf, and found Boyle and Gerard waiting. Then came the harsh blare of a siren, and searchlights leaped into life across the harbor.

"The alarm! They've lost no time!" gasped Boyle.

Instantly they sought shelter beneath the eaves of a buliding. The beam of a searchlight swept over their heads, rested for a moment on a big power boat that lay moored in front of them, then it swung out across the harbor and breakwater, boring into the darkness beyond. Their hopes of ever reaching the canoe Marmadu had placed for them near the entrance to the breakwater were smashed by those question lights.

Feet padded along the alleys as searchers began combing the harbor for them. To attempt to make their way back to town would be hopeless.

"Aboard that boat, there—quick!" gasped Wesson.

They slid from the dock sill to her deck, and Wesson made for a big dory that hung from davits over the stern. As his practised fingers worked at the lashings that held the canvas cover of the dory in place, they heard sounds of the searchers, probing every nook and corner of the dock above.

They crowded into the dory, crouching low beneath her thwarts.

was heading for the harbor entrance. "We're in for it," Boyle gasped. "This is the patrol boat! She's out for her nightly run, and to see we don't get away by boat!"

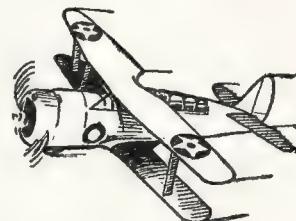
Wesson dropped the tarpaulin, groaning inwardly. What malignant fate had led them into a trap like this? There was nothing to do now but wait until she got outside, then risk getting overboard unseen, and swimming for one of the beaches outside the town. But the swim would be a long one, and the waters outside Dakar were notorious for sharks!

Once beyond the breakwater, the

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As Wesson threw the cover into place again they heard the thudding feet of men dropping to the deck. Discovery seemed inevitable now.

Wesson crouched in grim silence, one hand upon the gunwale, the other grasping his pistol. He was ready to spring out again, and battle it to a finish, rather than meet death before a firing squad. He had counted the men aboard as they came, and it seemed there were nine of them.

Engines began to throb. Then came voices from the dock, and the thud of mooring ropes as they hit the deck. Wesson cautiously raised the covering. He and Boyle peered out. The boat had drawn away from the wharf,

patrol boat swept the outer harbor in wide circles. Men were talking on her deck, and Wesson thought he recognized the voice of Rheindorf. A wave of hot anger surged through Wesson at sound of the Gestapo agent's voice.

Twice he had beaten this skulking German at his own game. Why not attempt it again?

Suddenly the boat shot off in a tangent from her circular sweep, striking directly seaward. The *Geronimo* would be out there. Had they spotted her signal light? If so, this was the time for action.

Wesson crouched low beneath the boat thwarts, and whispered hurried instructions to the others. The men

on deck were pacing back and forth. Their footsteps drew nearer, then stopped. Wesson raised the tarpaulin. In the beam of a searchlight he saw Rheindorf, standing below them. With him was a man in uniform.

**W**ESSON quietly pushed back the tarpaulin, and stood upright. For a moment he remained poised there, to give the others time.

"Now!" he whispered, and jumped. Wesson wished to avoid the alarming sounds of gunfire. He gripped his pistol by the barrel as he leaped, and the other three jumped with him. The Hun whirled as Wesson plummeted toward him, and whipped out his gun.

But Wesson struck him squarely, sent him crashing to the deck. Boyle was on the other man, and had him down. Half-stunned, Rheindorf raised his gun, but Wesson wrenched it from him. Then Rheindorf gripped his legs, and slammed him to the deck.

Wesson's free hand was at the German's throat. For some moments they rolled and fought in silent fury. Rheindorf kicked, clawed and squirmed, and dodged the blows Wesson aimed at his head. Shouts and a wild shot came from above as Wesson glimpsed figures racing along the deck.

His grip tightened on the German's throat. He drove the man's head against the deck with stunning impact. His gun butt rose and fell with a dull, thudding sound. Rheindorf kicked convulsively, and Wesson's fingers released their grip on his throat.

Fighting with savage fury, Boyle,

meanwhile, had overpowered the man in uniform and disarmed him, herding him toward the wheel-house. There he found Gerard, holding a gun to the steerman's head.

Up near the forecabin was Marmadu, guarding the rest of the crew at gun-point. One man had been winged, but the others stood docilely with up-raised arms. Wesson joined Marmadu, and swiftly disarmed them.

A tiny red light showed up ahead. Wesson rushed for the wheel-house, wrenched the spokes from the steersman, and headed straight for it.

"Now!" he said grimly. "Hold her dead for it! And shoot, Colonel, if he doesn't!"

Then he made a rapid search for arms, which he threw over the side. There were two machine-guns, which he damaged beyond repair. He saw Rheindorf was returning to consciousness, and bound him firmly.

"I think, Mr. Gestapo," he grinned, "you'll be a darn sight more valuable to the Britishers alive than dead!"

He saw Boyle talking to the Frenchman, and recognized him as the officer he had met at the *Café Paris*.

"I'm sorry, Captain," said Wesson, with an apologetic grin. "But it had to be done. That's my steamer ahead there, showing the small red light. Anyhow, when we're safe aboard her you can take this craft back to Dakar!"

The Frenchman bowed gravely.

"*M'sieu*," he said, "circumstances have placed my feet upon a path I should have chosen for myself. I go with you to join de Gaulle. De Gaulle for Dakar, *m'sieu*!"

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# THE WAR EAGLES

By G. H. GILROY-MOORE

*Author of "Prempeh's Ju-Ju," "Law of the Jungle," etc.*



*Prempeh Calls Upon the Ancient Customs of Jungleland to Wage a Battle for Modern Civilization!*

THE youthful Assistant District Commissioner fingered the debutante's eyebrow that grew on his upper lip, and looked up somewhat superciliously.

"Don't know that it's—ah—quite the thing, Carson, you know!" he drawled. "Why should you, an American, barge into my—ah—court, and ask to defend this fellow? Stealing canoes, you know, is quite a serious offense!"

Barry Carson, American trader, leaned negligently against the veranda rail of the decrepit wooden bungalow that served for the "court." He squinted through the glaring sunlight towards a dozen huge dug-outs drawn

up on the sandy beach of the estuary. He grinned.

"Well, your Worship, if that's the correct title in this court, why don't you call it piracy, and be done with it?"

The A. D. C. looked properly outraged.

"Not at all a matter for jesting, Mr. Carson, I assure you! The stolen canoes are French property, and you are aware of the present delicate situation. The matter might lead to international complications!"

Carson's tall, sinewy figure snapped erect. The bantering look had gone, and his clean-cut, square-jawed face took on a grim line.

"You're probably right there, Wetherby, in a way you don't seem to realize! Togoland's French territory all right, although the Germans happen to be running it, at the moment. If you'd quit being a two-by-four chief justice for a few minutes, we might get somewhere!"

"I don't trust our French captain here, by any means! I'm going to question Prempeh, whether you like it or not. If he had a hand in pinching those canoes, there's not a chance of a dishonest motive in it!"

And, before the scandalized official could interfere, Carson turned to the tall, stately, white-haired old native who stood there as the accused. He began to speak rapidly in the Twchi language.

"Tell me, old friend," Carson asked, "of this matter of the canoes. Why did you and your men take them from the other side of the river?"

Prempeh, Chief of All Ashanti, folded his arms across his leopard-skin robe. There was a look of mild disdain on his stern old face. He looked towards the commissioner before answering Carson in the same tongue.

"Carsoni," he replied, "the young one there is not very wise. He lacks experience, and does not use his eyes as a warrior should. There is trouble

coming from the other side, but he does not see it!"

Then Prempeh turned to a third white man, pale-eyed and black-bearded, who stood there as his accuser. "And this one, who tells you he is of the Frenchi, he lies, Carsoni!"

Carson eyed the thick-set, burly fellow in keen scrutiny. Somehow, the pale-blue eyes and the black beard failed to jibe, and there was a haunting familiarity about the thick-lipped, snub-nosed face.

"Seems to me, Captain Voisin, if that's the name," said Carson, "that we've met somewhere before."

"I have already given my name to the commissioner," the other returned stiffly, slurring his r's. "I am of de Gaulle's Free Frenchmen. You will return my canoes without delay, and the commissioner may deal with the culprit as he wishes!"

But Prempeh interposed, speaking in Twchi.

"Beware, Carsoni! Cast your mind back, many moons ago, when you and I were in Lome together! Was this one not there, with another who called himself Feldtheim?"

**T**HREE was an involuntary flicker in the pale-blue eyes, at mention of the name.

Carson's mind completed its groping cycle. With a grim look, he turned on the self-styled Frenchman.

"Oh,—yes!" he said, slowly. "That beard fooled me, Siefert! That's the name, my friend. Siefert! You were purser on that German freighter, and Feldtheim, the spy, helped you out in that brawl at Lome! Listen, Wetherby—"

But Siefert cut him short. In one swift movement he slid from the group, took a position between the front and rear entrances to the veranda. With a heavy automatic held low to his hip, he took his stand, dominating the scene.

Wetherby half-rose from his chair. He glanced at a sentry who stood out-

side, back towards the veranda, his rifle at rest. But Siefert saw the look, and forestalled him.

"Don't call the sentry, Mr. Commissioner!" he grated, in a low, hard voice.

"You'd be dead, quite dead, before he could turn!"

Wetherby sank slowly to his chair. For a few moments the group remained tense and immobile. Carson's eyes measured the distance between himself and Siefert. Siefert's eyes, coldly menacing, flickered craftily from one to the other of them.

Then Siefert's lips puckered, emitting a harsh, piercing whistle. Wetherby ducked, grabbed for a drawer in his table. Carson saw the fingers tighten on Siefert's gun. He leaped.

The gun crashed, as Carson's fist smashed to Siefert's face. Siefert staggered. Carson wrenched the gun from him, and swung it at his head. But even as he swung, Carson caught a glimpse of what was happening outside.

Galvanized to life, the sentry was moving towards the veranda, with rifle raised. But he stopped suddenly. Out there in the glaring sunlight, a thicket of young bamboo canes parted swiftly. A man with a sub-machine-gun stepped out.

"Down flat!" Carson yelled the warning as he dropped to the veranda boards. The sentry went to his knees, with rifle aimed. The man with the tommy gun stood fifty yards away.

Siefert recovered himself swiftly, dashed for the rear entrance. Carson heard his running feet, heard him as he dropped from the back veranda. Carson tried to line the pistol sights on the distant gunman, but the sentry's rifle cracked, and the man slid back to cover.

There was a moment of silence, then the machine-gun began hammering from the depths of the thicket. Carson saw the sentry go down in a heap. Then he sprang to his feet, and

followed by Wetherby, made for the outside through the back entrance.

They saw Siefert and his ally making at breakneck speed for a distant grove of oil-palms, and disappear into its protective denseness.

Swiftly the commissioner assembled his Haussa soldiers, with their Lewis gun, and took up the pursuit.

It was an hour later when they sighted the fugitives. They were canoeing swiftly across the river, a couple of miles away up-stream. Wetherby yelled an order to his men, but Carson pointed to the long shadows thrown by the fast-sinking sun.

"Too late!" he said. "It'll be dark in less than half an hour. They'd hit the bush over there long before you could get them within range!"

Back on the veranda, Wetherby's hand shook a little as he poured a drink for Carson and himself. His men were moving the body of the slain sentry, and death in swift and violent form was new to him.

Carson held his glass thoughtfully. He looked out across the wide, dun-colored waters of the Volta River to the tangle of mangrove and palms that lined the other side.

"Your international complications are coming all right, Wetherby. And they're stemming from over there. Premeh has been telling me things. The Hun is busy in Togoland. Put that in your next report to the governor.

"We on the Gold Coast will need to look out. There are all too few troops in the Colony. Accra and Coomassie have been stripped of native regulars, who've all been sent to East Africa!"

**C**ARSON stood on the veranda, watching the glory of the coming sun. It slowly picked up the feathery crests of the distant jungle, and threw them into vivid relief. It mounted swiftly, and sent golden shafts slanting onto the sandy beach before the bungalow.

Carson followed the beams with his

eyes, then started suddenly. The canoes, the cause of yesterday's trouble, were gone! Spirited away in the night, every one of them!

He called to Wetherby, who looked nonplussed. Together they stepped from the veranda.

"But I posted a sentry, to watch them," said Wetherby. "Where is he?"

Wetherby called to the native sergeant, and together they began a search. They found no canoes, but they found the sentry. He lay stark in the grove of oil-palms. His hideous throat-wound gave mute evidence of why he had failed to give vocal warning. White-faced, Wetherby turned to Carson.

"If that's Nazi work, Carson, what in heaven's name can they want here?" he asked. "There's nothing here in Addah. Nothing! It's just an isolated place. There are a couple of trading stores run by natives. No other white men. Nothing!"

But Carson hurried him back to the bungalow, and found a pair of binoculars. He raised the glasses to his eyes, and carefully scanned the far side of the estuary. Then he handed the glasses to Wetherby.

"Wetherby." He spoke grimly. "The Gold Coast's in for a small but *pukka blitzkrieg*. And Addah's the place it's going to strike first! Look over to that sandy stretch of beach, beyond the point, and let me know what you can see!"

Wetherby looked long and earnestly, then lowered the glasses.

"Canoes," he said. "And white men—hundreds of them!"

"And that's not all! Look again!"

Wetherby took the glasses. His face wore a puzzled expression as he lowered them.

"Trucks!" he exclaimed. "Half a dozen or more. But that doesn't make sense, Carson, they can't get across here in trucks!"

Carson looked at him with a slightly pitying expression,

"You're not long on imagination, are you, Wetherby? Why do you suppose our friend the "Free Frenchman" was so busy collecting canoes—the biggest ones he could get? I'll tell you.

"You've seen those big dug-outs carry a couple of tons of palm kernels or cocoa. Lashed together, and planked over, they'd make dandy pontoons. And pontoons are what those fellows over there want, Wetherby. Those trucks are probably armored trucks; they may even be small tanks!"

**W**EATHERBY looked thunderstruck.

"I still don't see why they'd want to come here!"

"You don't?" snapped Carson, becoming exasperated. "Then listen! And get this into your head as fast as you can! The launch comes in today, doesn't it?"

"Yes. Craig's bringing her down from Akusi. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Plenty! Those fellows are fixing up a regular flotilla of dug-out pontoons, for themselves and their equipment. They could tow it up to Akusi by man power. Haul it by three or four big canoes, with a dozen men paddling in each. But with the help of the launch they'd get to Akusi in half the time."

Wetherby looked slightly vacant.

"What then?" he asked.

"What then?" repeated Carson, impatiently. "Use your head, man! Accra's only seventy miles from Akusi by land. It's less by sea, I know, but an outfit like that couldn't land there, because of the surf. But if they get to Akusi, the road to Accra's wide open to them, and they'd get there in jig time!"

"And then what?" asked Wetherby, sarcastically. "What could a small force like that do to Accra?"

"Good God, man! Don't stand there parroting like a damned fool! I've

told you Accra's almost bare of troops. We're stuck here. Can't even make off up-river to warn Craig, for there isn't a canoe in the place. But there's telephone communication between here and Accra. Get onto it, fast, and give them warning!

"There's something else you don't seem to know, Wetherby. Brand new, American bombing planes are arriving there daily, on their first hop to the East. They're the object of this vest-pocket blitz!"

Thoroughly aroused now, the Englishman streaked for an inner room, where Carson heard him frantically ringing the telephone. He continued for a few minutes, then came back looking hectic.

"The line's dead!" he gasped.

Carson eyed him morosely.

"Might have guessed it!" he said. "Done while we sat jawing here, last night, like a pair of fools!"

He began to pace the veranda rapidly, his head sunk in thought.

"Listen, Wetherby!" Carson halted suddenly. "If that force reaches Akusi, they'll be in Accra two hours later. They'll surprise the few troops in the cantonments, take the place in fifteen minutes; then sit down, while Uncle Sam's brand new planes drop into their laps.

"Somehow we're going to stop it—you and I and Prempeh, together with those few troops of yours. It's long odds, boy, but we'll make it, somehow!"

**I**N THE face of imminent danger, the Englishman had completely shed his lackadaisical manner. He was now alert. And he seemed to look to Carson for guidance.

Like other officials in that British colony, he knew and trusted this square-dealing Yankee trader, and his friend and ally. Prempeh of Ashanti, who had once fought the English, and lost to them, had so won their admiration through his sterling qualities, that they had later restored him

as Chief Paramount of All Ashanti.

Wetherby saw the resolution that shone from Carson's eyes, and spoke with quiet dignity.

"It's my job, Carson. But as an American, you've a right to be mixed in it. And, man! I'll be glad of your help! What do you suggest, as our first move?"

Carson pondered for a moment.

"Go down to the landing," he said. "Try and signal Craig, as he comes down-river, and warn him off. And try, somehow, to get a message through to Accra, or at least to Akusi.

Frankly, though, I don't see how we're going to do it. If, by chance, the launch arrives before those fellows get across here, we could grab it and make for Akusi. Then we could make a stand there that would delay the Nazis a bit, give time for word to reach Accra well ahead of them!"

Wetherby quietly nodded assent. Then, with his few troopers and the Lewis gun, they filed off down the narrow roadway leading to the mile-distant landing.

Prempeh swung along beside them, the light of battle shining from his old eyes. His bold, warrior-like bearing heartened the younger Haussa soldiers who marched in grim silence behind them.

"Halt! To cover, everybody!" It was Carson who shouted the warning. Even as he shouted, there came the rattle of a machine-gun from the distant landing. And a stream of bullets whipped up the red dust of the roadway ahead of them.

As one man, they made the shelter of the scrub-brush that lined the narrow road, and fell, prone. Carson and Prempeh, the last to make cover, squirmed to the roadside for observation.

Across the roadway, where it dipped to the landing, was a regular breastwork of sandbags. The grim muzzle of a machine-gun, now silent, poked through a loophole. A big dug-

out canoe was drawn up on the sloping beach below the sandbags.

Carson turned to Wetherby, who was now beside him.

"Caught!" he groaned. "Fairly trapped! Siefert, or somebody, has been busy during the night!" Then, with set face, he went on.

"We've got to get those fellows, Wetherby, before their friends get across here!"

For a few minutes they lay in consultation. Wetherby issued an order. Two of his men disappeared, to come back shortly with a box of hand-grenades.

"Now, Carson," he said. "This is quite definitely *my* job! You stay here, with two men and the Lewis. I'll take the rest of them, rush that place, and bomb those fellows out!"

The boy was elated. He had guts, all right! Carson looked at him soberly for a moment, then announced his flat veto.

"You certainly will not, Wetherby!" he said, decisively. "Look through those bushes, and weigh up the position. That machine-gun's two hundred yards away; the brush stops dead, a little more than halfway. You'd have a hundred yards of open space to cross before you got there. You wouldn't reach those sandbags with a single living man!"

Wetherby protested vehemently, but the caution of the older man prevailed. He looked to Carson for further guidance.

"What, then?" he asked.

"Move down the whole party, one by one, to where the brush fringes the beach to the right of the sandbags. From there we may find a way of flanking them!"

**F**ROM their new position, Carson wormed his way down to the thinnest of cover. There straggling thorn-brush and prickly-pear lined the sloping, sandy beach. Prempeh crept down beside him.

The swiftly-mounting sun bore

down on them with a blasting heat. Before them lay the wide, mangrove-fringed sweep of the Volta River, rolling down slowly on its desultory course from the wild, African hinterland. And down those dun, swirling waters would come Craig with the launch, at any moment.

A few hundred yards to the left of them lay the sandbag emplacement. Carson scanned it through the glasses —saw no sign of life; but over the still air the distant sound of thick, guttural voices was borne to him.

Again, with the aid of the glasses, he looked over to the other side of the estuary. There was intense activity. By means of plank gangways, scores of men were now embarking their heavy equipment.

Once again Carson's eyes swept his field of vision. There was nothing before him but the sandbag emplacement, an ancient, disused stern-wheeler launch moored to the beach some hundred yards beyond it, and the monotonous sweep of the sun-drenched jungle and swirling waters.

The faraway hoot of a siren drifted down the river. That would be Craig, with the launch, passing a tiny village half a dozen miles or so upstream. Carson started backwards swiftly. They must get into action of some sort at once, or it would be too late.

But Prempeh detained him with a gesture.

"Carsoni!" he whispered. "The talking-vine of the white man is dead. Wetherby cannot make his voice heard along the string that goes to Accra. But there is the *frontomfrom*. It can speak from here to Akusi!"

Carson looked puzzled. "Frontomfrom, the talking drum? Is there one, here in Addah?"

"I think not," said Prempeh. "But there is something that may answer as well!"

He was looking toward the old steam-launch. A dreary, forlorn-looking hulk, she lay rotting away there on the beach. Her funnel, torn from

its seating by fierce tropical storms, lurched drunkenly across her deck, resting against the rail. Carson frowned at it for a moment, then a look of enlightenment swept his face.

"By the Golden Stool, old warrior, I believe you have it!"

Then his face fell again; for Prempeh must retrace his steps through the bush. He must then run the gauntlet for a full hundred yards, in full view of those men behind the sandbags, ere he could reach his makeshift drum—the funnel of the old launch.

Carson called softly to Wetherby, and they went into hurried consultation. Swiftly Carson worked out a plan.

From where they lay, the beach sloped down abruptly. By working along the fringe of bush further to the right, he could reach a place from which he might make the lower beach unseen. Then he could work around until he was at the rear of the men behind the sandbags.

Once there, he could create sufficient distraction to screen Prempeh's dash for the launch. He worked out his plan minutely, impressing it upon Wetherby.

"Give me ten minutes to get down there behind them," he said. "Then open fire with everything you've got!"

Carson turned to Prempeh, and gripped his hand.

"And you, old friend, keep in cover until the shooting starts. You, and the *frontomfrom*, are the last hope of getting the alarm to Accra!"

Prempeh looked at him soberly.

"Never fear, Carsoni. I will send out the call, or die! Better so, than to live on under these German dogs, who once ruled in Togo with fire and the lash!"

**C**ARSON found a place from which he could reach the lower beach unobserved. Swiftly he crept downward below the rim of sand. His pockets sagged with Mills hand grenades,

and he gripped Siefert's pistol in one hand.

He bent double, went forward cautiously over the yielding, hot sand, the fierce sun beating down upon his spine in sickening intensity. Huge crabs sidled away from him as he crept along, raising their claws menacingly; and small sand scorpions, with tails raised belligerently, scurried upward at his approach.

The launch was in sight now, far upstream. It was heading for the landing through shoal water. There was a thick, heavy silence, broken only by the distant throbbing of her engines. Would Craig take warning, when the shooting started, and keep away?

Carson finally reached a place that should bring him directly below the sandbag emplacement. He paused to gain his breath, took one of the hand grenades from a pocket. Holding the spring-actuated striking lever tightly to the side of the bomb, he swiftly withdrew the safety-pin. Then he raised his head guardedly, and looked up the slope.

A dozen men were stationed there, behind the sandbags, almost forty yards away. Two of them who carried submachine-guns, were looking toward the approaching launch. Another crouched watchfully over the rim of the barrier. The remainder grouped about a machine-gun mounted on a light carriage.

Carson ducked instantly, and carefully gripped the bomb. The minutes ticked off swiftly, as he listened to the guttural mutterings of the men above him.

Suddenly a crash of rifle fire broke the tension. It was echoed by the mad chattering of the Lewis gun. Wetherby and his men had gone into action. Guttural shouts and answering fire sounded above. Carson sprang to his feet, poised himself for a moment, then hurled the bomb with all his force.

He watched it describe an arc

against the skyline, unseen by the men behind the barrier. There was a brief pause in the shooting, and the grenade fell with a soft thud into the sand amongst them. For an instant some of them looked down at it, stupidly.

Then, with a crashing, metallic roar, it burst into a sheet of livid flame, that was lost in a spouting geyser of sand and screaming metal fragments.

In the three second interval Carson had prepared another missile of death. A swift side glance showed him Prempeh, racing for the old steam launch. Carson poised himself again and hurled the second bomb, then a third, with deadly accuracy.

Fragments of spent metal sang past him. Other fragments, red and ghastly, sailed through the air and littered the sand in front of him. Through the subsiding cloud of débris he saw the shambles behind the sandbags.

There were four men still on their feet, struggling with the machine-gun, striving to swing it round on him. He hurled the fourth bomb, but it went wide. He went down on his face as a stream of bullets tore up the sand in front of him.

Carson heard a wild yelling, and came to his feet with another bomb ready. He poised to throw it, but checked himself just in time. Over the sandbags came Wetherby, and with him half a dozen screaming, red-fezzed black demons.

Their glittering bayonets gleamed wickedly in the glaring sunlight. Carson heard the agonized cries of their victims as the Haussas' bayonets did their grim work. Then Wetherby vaulted over the huddle of bloody figures that lay behind the sandbags, and came running down the slope to meet Carson.

**A**S HE ran, a thunderous, reverberating sound burst upon his eardrums. Prempeh had reached the

deck of the old steamer. Savagely elated, he gripped two sticks of drift-wood with which he beat upon the funnel, sending out a wild, booming rhythm. It rolled across the estuary, echoed and re-echoed from the walls of jungle, and rolled on up the slowly flowing river. He drummed on for minutes, then stopped abruptly.

The vibrations of the sound died. There came a rapid pulsation through the heavy, heat-sodden air. It was the answering call of the drummer in the nearest village upstream. Prempeh listened to it for a few moments, then resumed his drumming.

He rolled out the savage call insistently, minute after minute. His old face was grim and set, and sweat poured from his lean body. Then he threw his sticks to the deck, and listened again. His call had been received and understood, for the drummer up-river was throbbing out his wild broadcast.

Carson turned to Wetherby with a triumphant look.

"The *frontomfrom!*!" he said. "The old war drum, that has sent the war call through Ashanti a hundred times! Old Africa will beat them, Wetherby. That warning will be relayed to Accra!"

"There's the launch, almost in. What in the world is Craig doing?"

The launch stopped suddenly, three hundred yards from the wharf. She seemed to be aground, for her propeller was churning up a swirl of white water astern. Carson raised the glasses to make certain.

"Siefert's aboard her!" he shouted. "He's holding a gun on Craig! I believe Craig's grounded her on purpose. Quick, Wetherby! Into the water with that canoe!"

Carson crowded into the canoe, with Wetherby and six of his men. He watched the two white men who stood on the launch's deck, one gesticulating wildly. The few native passengers she carried took to the water, and struck out for shore. Wetherby

crouched in the prow of the canoe with a rifle. He held back his shots, lest he hit Craig.

The canoe shot swiftly toward the launch. Carson saw Craig duck swiftly, grab for Siefert's legs. But Siefert sidestepped, and fired twice. Craig sank limply to the deck, and Siefert ran for the cabin.

At last they reached the launch, the canoe grating along her iron hull. Carson leapt aboard and made toward the cabin. But Siefert saw him coming, and shot up from below. His bearded face was working savagely, his gun flaming, as he bore down on Carson.

we're going to need it! Look over there!"

A huge flotilla of dug-out pontoons, crowded with men and trucks, had cast loose from the other side. It was now coming upstream, towed by big dug-outs, each manned by a dozen paddling white men. And far ahead racing steadily under swift paddle strokes, were three big canoes crowded with armed men. They were heading upstream, to cut off the launch.

Craig, bleeding from body wounds, grinned feebly as Carson bent over him.

"What's this, Carson, another Dun-

*Lieutenant Michael Arledge of Naval Intelligence Fights to  
Halt a Sinister Enemy Plan in*

## BATTLE STATIONS

*A Thrill-a-Minute Novelet of War  
With Japan*

By HENRY KUTTNER

Coming Next Month in THRILLING ADVENTURES



Carson crouched, aimed steadily, and fired. Siefert stopped in mid-career, and hit the deck heavily, face downward.

**U**NHARMED by the mêlée, the engine continued to hum. The sixty-foot deck of the launch was loaded heavily, with sacks of palm kernels and other freight. With a sweeping gesture to the stuff that littered the deck, Carson shouted to Wetherby.

"Get this stuff overboard, fast as you can, and she may float off! Send one man off for Prempeh, and the rest of your men with the Lewis gun. Man,

kirk?" he gasped. "That fellow stopped me up-river. Was in a dug-out. Said he'd been on a trading trip, and his boys had ditched him. Asked for a ride to Addah...."

His voice trailed off, and he fell into a dead faint as Carson bore him to the cabin.

Carson slowed the engine, while Wetherby and his men toiled to jettison the cargo. Then Prempeh and the others joined them, until most of the stuff was overside. Then Carson called a halt.

"Crowd back aft," he ordered. "Get all your weight astern, while I try and get her off!"

He went to the engine, reversed it, and threw on all speed astern. The launch shuddered for a few moments, then freed herself. Slowing the engine again, Carson went on deck.

As he looked out over the water, Carson realized they were trapped. The three canoes had shot ahead, and strung across the stream, now lay in wait for them. Downstream, the flotilla came on at a steady pace, drawn by a dozen swiftly-paddled canoes.

Carson saw Wetherby and his men, stringing the remaining sacks of palm kernels across the deck in a protective breastwork. Wetherby planted himself in the center with the Lewis gun. Carson returned to the engine, and jammed on full speed ahead. Then he jumped for the wheel, and shouted to Wetherby.

"All right, Wetherby, keep your head down, and hold your fire until you're dead certain! I'm going to try and ram those canoes, one by one. And don't worry if they start throwing any heavy stuff from behind us. They won't sink the launch, they want her too badly!"

**H**E SWUNG the launch, set her course dead for the nearest canoe which lay about a mile away. The launch began to eat up the distance swiftly.

Soon the Germans showed concern at her approach, for the canoe began moving in ever widening circles. Then, from each of the canoes came a withering blast of rifle and sub-machine-gun fire. Nickeled bullets rang sharply on the launch's iron sides, whined across her deck, or thudded harmlessly into bags of palm kernels.

Carson saw Wetherby crouch low over the Lewis gun, his fingers clenched around the firing mechanism.

"Steady, boy!" Carson shouted. "Hold it a while. Just a little while longer!"

Carson hugged the deck closely,

and steered by the lower spokes of the wheel.

Carson headed for midstream, as though to run the gauntlet. Then he swung again, toward the nearest canoe, now but a hundred yards distant.

"Now, Wetherby!" he shouted. "Let them have it!"

A red-fezzed trooper sprang to his feet, levelled his rifle at the canoe. But he spun around ere he could fire, and hit the deck heavily.

Then Wetherby flew into action. The ugly snout of the Lewis shot through the embrasure, and hosed out an intermittent stream of livid flame.

The prow of the dug-out flew into splinters. One by one, her occupants slumped into a writhing heap. But there were still some who worked their hot rifles even as the steel nose of the launch sheared into her, and plunged her bloody cargo into the dun waters of the river.

Carson swung the launch again. The other canoes were closing in on her, one on each side. Suddenly the launch lost speed. There came a gurgling sound from her exhaust, and the engine stopped dead.

Carson dived for the engine, began working feverishly on a choked feed-pipe. His flying fingers were accelerated by the fury of gun-fire overhead, while Wetherby and his Haussas strove madly to hold off the enemy.

Sweat poured from him, as he worked madly at his task. He heard the hacking roar of the Lewis, sending out burst after burst of fire. Then the obstruction was cleared, the feed restored, and the engine resumed its rhythmic humming. Carson rushed out on deck to see gray figures clambering over the stern.

Four of Wetherby's men sprawled on the deck, motionless. Wetherby, blood streaming from his face, stood dazedly holding a rifle. Prempeh snatched a bayoneted rifle from the deck, rushed at the oncoming foe. As he lunged with the glittering bayonet,

the old Ashanti war chant came full-throatedly:

*Asanti! Ankobea o ye!*  
If we go forward, we die  
If we go backward, we die,  
Better go forward, and die!

And Carson leaped beside him, swinging a bayoneted rifle. Carson felt himself elated beyond reason. Blows fell upon him, which he sensed, but did not feel. The eerie savagery of the war chant surged in his ears as he lunged, and felt the intoxicating ecstasy of battle. It lasted but fleeting seconds, and was ended.

Carson let his gun drop to the slimy, reddened deck. Wetherby swayed beside him, feebly trying to charge an empty magazine.

The launch, with no guiding hand at her wheel, was heading for the dense jungle wall that encompassed the estuary. Swiftly recovering his balance, Carson ran to the wheel.

As his hands gripped the spokes, he heard a wild, triumphant shout from Prempeh. "Carsoni! O Carsoni! Look above you! The *frontomfrom* has done its work truly! It has called out the eagles of war!"

Carson looked up quickly, heard the ever increasing roar of propeller blades. There was a plane there, up in that brassy sky, and it was swooping down at breathless speed. Then it circled in wide sweeps, and at each turn swung lower.

Twice it seemed to hover over the flotilla of death, that was crowded with men and their implements of murder. It swung upward, and swooped for the last time. The men in the canoes began to paddle frantically for the protective cover of the jungle.

The plane was in a low dive now, and Carson saw the first missile that dropped from it. It fell wide of the

flotilla, and sent up a huge geyser of water. But it was followed by a second, a third and a fourth, and the flotilla was struck squarely.

Carson saw a huge mushroom of churning water and smoke, that rose magically, and faded slowly, leaving a hurricane of fragments that fell and littered the shimmering surface of the estuary. The flotilla was gone. In one awful blast, it had met the wholesale death it epitomized.

**D**AZED, but unshaken, and with the ecstasy of victory surging through him, Carson headed the launch for the landing. He slowed down halfway to tend the wounded, but still undaunted Wetherby.

The plane had come down on the hard, sandy beach as they landed, and a young Flight-lieutenant met Carson with outstretched hand.

"Don't know who you are, old man," said the youngster. "But you've been doing a great job around here!"

"Somebody rushed to the Governor half an hour ago with a goofy message that had come by bush telegraph. Something about sending the "war eagles" to Addah. The old boy was a bit skeptical about it, but I just happened to be hopping off for Khartum—and here I am."

"Glad to know you, I'm sure—and who's your venerable old native friend?"

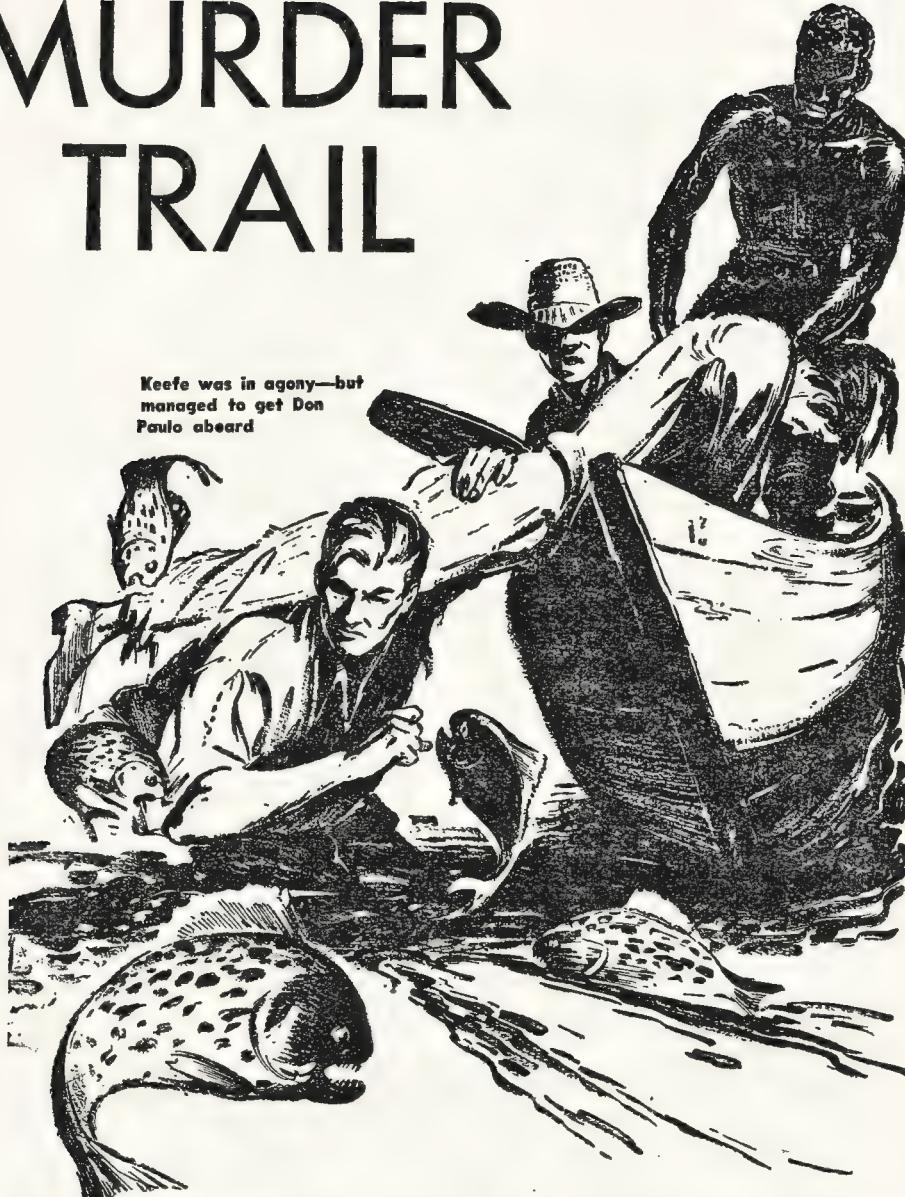
"That," replied Carson, "is the old boy who called for the 'war eagles.' If it hadn't been for him, the Governor would have got a jolt that would have knocked all the skepticism clean out of him!"

The three men stood together, bound by the ties of an emergency they had shared. For a moment, the old world, the new world, and the ancient, joined hands.

●  
**Next Month: PREMPEH LOWERS THE SWASTIKA,  
Another Smashing Yarn by G. H. GILROY-MOORE**

# MURDER TRAIL

Keefe was in agony—but managed to get Don Paulo aboard



By HENRY KUTTNER

*Author of "The Ghost Wolves," "The Old Army Game," etc.*

*Sudden Doom Awaits Jerry Keefe as He Braves a Killer Ambush in the Amazonian Wilds!*

IT WAS surprising to see a Jivaro in Para. The stocky little head-hunters seldom stray from their native jungle far up the Amazon. Yet in the shadows by the hotel stood a

glistening, long-haired figure which Jerry Keefe placed immediately as a Jivaro.

He knew the type. Knocking around the world, picking up odd jobs here

and there, Keefe had not omitted South America from his itinerary. But it had been years since he had last been in Para—and, of course, he might be mistaken.

Nevertheless, the sight of a Jivaro had always meant one thing—and that was danger.

The lean, brown-faced American swung toward the shadowy figure, but it was gone, hidden in the night. Keefe hesitated. Well, it was none of his business. Natives sometimes came down-river to investigate the white man's civilization. Shrugging, Keefe turned away and entered the hotel.

The desk clerk, a sharp-featured Brazilian, looked up inquiringly. "Can I help you, sir?"

"Maybe," Keefe said. "I was told Don Paulo Cante's staying here. Right?"

"Yes, sir," the clerk acknowledged. "He arrived a few days ago. He has been waiting for the Marajo boat."

"So am I," Keefe grunted. "Ring his room, will you? He doesn't know my name, but tell him I'm a friend of Vicente Miranda."

"Don Vicente?" The Brazilian looked more closely at Keefe, noting the hard, sinewy figure under the clean tropical whites, the cool gray eyes, the strong jaw of a fighter, and the suspicious bulge under one arm. But many people carried guns in Para—especially if their destination was Marajo Island.

The clerk said so. "If I may make the suggestion—leather leggings are necessary. Shorts are no protection against the *jararaca* snakes."

Keefe grinned. "Thanks for the advice—but I've been here before."

"To Marajo?"

"No. But—"

"The island is not quite like the rest of this country, sir. I have been there and seen the *jacaré*—the crocs—piled up like cordwood in the swamps. Also, the jaguars and buffalo are bad. But the snakes are worst of all. It is hard to see them in the grasslands." The

Brazilian leaned forward confidentially. A dark brilliance came into his eyes. "A strange place, Marajo. Time stopped there two—three hundred years ago. The ranchers are despots. It is barbarous, uncivilized. I did not stay long."

Keefe quirked up an eyebrow. "So? I guess I can stand it for a day or two. Don Vicente gave me a standing invitation. Now what about ringing Cante's room?"

"Don Paulo is in the bar," the clerk muttered, obviously not inclined to lose a listener.

"Thanks. Oh—" Keefe turned back. "Say, I thought I saw a Jivaro outside. Didn't know there were any in Para."

"There are a few. We do not like them here. They are dangerous—barbarous. I am going back to Buenos Aires pretty soon—"

**K**EEFE didn't wait to hear the rest. He swung toward the bar, pushed through the door, and stopped. Because of the early hour there were not many occupants in the room. Two Europeans were drinking cognac in a corner. A blond girl was crying into her beer, and a thin, wiry, bronze-faced man was at the bar, fondling a whiskey straight. Obviously, this was Don Paulo Cante.

Keefe walked forward and touched the other's shoulder. Instantly Cante swung around. His hand darted into his coat and emerged with a tiny automatic clutched in it. A strange dread rippled suddenly across his clean cheeks.

"Hold it!" Keefe said, patting the air. "I'm not a head-hunter. My name's Jerry Keefe."

The other did not answer. He replaced his gun, but kept his hand near his lapel.

"What do you want?" came his flat-toned query.

Keefe signaled the bartender. "Brandy and splash. Drink?" he questioned.

Don Paulo's face grew more rigid.

A faint wildness showed in his eyes and his voice dropped a notch.

"I asked you a question."

"Okay. Fair enough," said Keefe, grinning. "I came down to Para to catch the Marajo boat. They told me there was another chap waiting for it, so I thought I'd look you up—especially since I heard you're a friend of Miranda's."

There was no encouragement to continue in Cante's hard, black eyes, but Keefe went on anyhow.

"I'm on the loose till the boat docks tomorrow, so I figured you might have a drink with me."

"What do you want with Don Vicente Miranda?" Again those hard eyes bracketed Keefe with a steady pressure.

A hot tide of annoyance somersaulted up through Keefe, but he fought it down. "I owe him some dough," he explained. "A couple of hundred. . . . A few years ago I was broke and on the beach. I ran into Miranda, and he set me up. Loaned me the money and got me out of the *calabozo*. Some passport trouble—nothing much, but the authorities were pretty scary at the time. Now I'm on the loose, and since I was near Para, I thought I'd look up Miranda and pay him what I owe him."

"I fear I do not desire your acquaintance," Cante said. His tone was edged with ice.

Keefe's jaw dropped. He started to answer in kind, then looked narrowly at the other's eyes.

"What are you afraid of?" he demanded.

Cante's lips thinned. "Do not annoy me further," he said, "or I shall speak to the management."

Keefe turned red, slammed down his glass, and threw a coin on the bar. Without a word he whirled and went out. What the devil! He wasn't a leper. What sort of guy was this Don Paulo Cante, anyway? And why was he so frightened?

For the fear in his eyes had been

unmistakable. There was some mystery here. Acting upon impulse, Keefe found a chair half-concealed behind a pillar, picked up a newspaper, and settled himself to wait. He was profoundly curious. And he was not forgetting the Jivaro he had seen lurking outside the hotel.

Was there any connection?

Presently, he asked the desk clerk a few casual questions. Don Paulo Cante had come down-river a few days ago. He had been exploring. Nobody knew much about him, except that he was a friend of Miranda. Keefe brooded. Miranda was a right guy. How had he ever picked up this—this lug?

Cante emerged from the bar, and Keefe dived behind his newspaper. The Brazilian, after a hasty glance around, went out. Keefe followed. He could see Don Paulo a few yards away, moving along the street with an odd appearance of haste.

**S**OMETHING stirred in the shadows. Warning was a sudden fierce call in Keefe's blood. He saw only a seven-foot pole, a long rod that he recognized instantly as a blow-gun. Keefe lunged forward. His hand streaked under his coat.

Keefe shrilled a warning to Cante as his hurtling shoulder struck the Brazilian hard and sent him spinning away. Keefe was already dropping flat when a tiny wind of death brushed his cheek. His gun came up, frothing redly, bucking to the roar of a shot. There was a clatter, then the soft scrape of racing, naked feet.

That was all. Keefe got up. Cante was rising from the street, his eyes wide, gun in hand.

"Senhor! What—"

Keefe grinned tightly. He bent down and picked up a splinter of bamboo. "Jambi," he said. "Poison, of course."

Don Paulo came forward to examine the missile. He nodded.

"Ora—well, I should have expected

it. When one of the boys deserted, he must have come down-river and . . . talked." He caught himself. "My thanks, *Senor*."

Footsteps sounded. Keefe's shout and the noise of the shot had attracted attention. Cante glanced around hurriedly.

"We must not be found here. I shall speak with you later."

Before Keefe could halt him, the Brazilian had turned and dived into an alley in the wake of the vanished Jivaro. The American grunted, started to follow but halted when he saw that the Brazilian had vanished.

What it all meant Keefe couldn't figure out. In any case, he could do nothing more at the moment. He'd see Don Paulo again on the Marajo boat. Keefe shrugged and made for a brightly-lit thoroughfare. It was too early to go to bed. Besides, he hadn't been in Para for years. . . .

There was no sign of the Brazilian when Keefe boarded the boat for Marajo the next morning. Probably Don Paulo Cante was below deck. Keefe settled himself in a creaky rattan chair, and tried to ignore the smells. That was difficult. The boat hadn't been disinfected since the days of the pre-Incas, he decided.

The steamer slipped slowly downstream to Soure, one of the few Marajo coastal towns. Cattle thronged the streets and white houses gleamed in the blazing sunlight. Again Keefe looked for Don Paulo.

This time he saw the Brazilian. The man burst out of his cabin as though pursued by devils. Keefe hailed him in vain. Cante fled over the gangplank, with a terrified glance at the American, and disappeared.

Keefe followed swiftly, wondering what the devil this was all about. Well, Don Paulo couldn't keep running away indefinitely. He was heading for Miranda's ranch, and there Keefe would catch up with him and satisfy his curiosity.

Meanwhile, Keefe had to get trans-

portation to the ranch itself. A canoe with blue sails provided the answer to that. Keefe haggled with the crew, counted out *milreis*, and climbed aboard. He lit a cigarette and watched the mascot, a sakiwinki monkey named Chico. On Marajo all monkeys were named Chico. The creature swung from the sail and chattered sadly.

There was another canoe ahead, but it outran Keefe's craft. Presently Soure dropped astern. To port lay a mudbank where occasional huge land-crabs scuttled about. There was a hot, damp stickiness in the air. It warned Keefe that the heavy rains would not be long in coming now, though the sky was still cloudless.

**H**OURS must have passed before Keefe shot a glance toward the shore and caught a glimpse of dingy brown sails, vanishing up a broad, shallow watercourse.

"What's up there?" he demanded of one of the natives.

"A stream, *Seu*. It goes to the ranch. But it is not the best way. The *caimans*—"

"Take it anyway." Keefe was conscious of a feeling of impending danger. It was in the muggy air, pressing down like an almost tangible blanket. The canoe spurted ahead, between high grassy banks—

Keefe caught sight of the other craft, and simultaneously let out a shout of warning. Don Paulo Cante was sitting there, gun bared in his hand—but he was not looking in the right direction. A naked, brown-skinned native had just brought down his *machete*. Now the heavy boom was swinging toward the Brazilian's unprotected head.

Don Paulo looked around. But he was too late. The boom caught him. Across the intervening water Keefe heard the sickening crack as the man was flung clear out of the canoe, splashing heavily in the water. Instantly the natives scurried about like

disturbed ants. One pointed to the pursuing craft and yelled something. The men paddled frantically. It was useless to pursue them, for they were beaching the canoe and scattering into the high grass.

It was more vital to rescue Don Paulo. Keefe saw the widening red stain in the water as the Brazilian struggled feebly to stay afloat. And a split second later he glimpsed a few floating chunks of meat—thrown in by the natives to draw the deadly little *piranhas*.

Keefe's eyes narrowed. It had all been very carefully planned, then. But why? Keefe was wondering about that as he plunged overboard into the shallow stream and hoisted Don Paulo's slim body to his shoulders. Sudden, agonizing pain nipped his legs. The *piranhas*—

Keefe flung himself toward the canoe and somehow got aboard with the Brazilian, almost overturning the craft. The natives sprang toward him. Keefe went for his gun before realizing that their intentions were not hostile. They were hurriedly removing the *piranhas* that still clung to the flesh of the two white men.

Keefe gritted his teeth and endured it. His wounds, though painful, were not severe. But Don Paulo was in a critical condition. The voracious cannibal fish had swept quickly to the kill.

The Brazilian groaned, opened his eyes, and saw Keefe. Realization leaped into his gaze. He lifted his head painfully and stared around.

"It's okay, *Senhor*," Keefe said, tight-lipped. "You're safe now."

Cante's face was gray. His vision was blurred. He beckoned.

"Come—closer. Quickly! I am dying—" He brushed aside Keefe's futile words. "There is little time. The—the natives do not understand English. I—should have—trusted you—but I was—afraid—"

Pain twisted the Brazilian's mouth. "Brandy—"

Keefe put his flask to the other's lips. Don Paulo gasped as the stinging liquid went down his throat.

"Thanks. *Senhor*—you are a friend of—Miranda? You would not—betray him?"

"That's right," Keefe said quietly.

**T**HE Brazilian's feverish gaze bored into Keefe's while his mouth grew slack..

"Good. Now listen. Miranda will—lose his ranch—all he owns—unless he gets my message. He is—my cousin. We heard of a—a place—where radium is. Far up the river. I went to—search for it. Here—in my shirt—"

Keefe bent forward and brought out a small lead box, less than six inches long. "This?"

"Give it—to Miranda. No one else. I—trust—no one. These attacks—tried to keep me from reaching Miranda—"

Don Paulo shuddered violently. His lips went lax. He fell back in Keefe's arms.

The American stared down at the worn, haggard face. What a devilish way to die! If only Don Paulo had trusted him sooner!

But he had not. And now he was dead—murdered.

Keefe opened the box. There was a small chunk of ore inside. Was it pitchblende? Beneath the ore lay a folded sheet of paper. A map. The American replaced both in the little leaden casket and stowed it inside his shirt. Then he looked around.

The natives were watching him.

"Seu—"

"To the ranch," Jerry Keefe said. "Quickly."

Paddles dug into the water. The canoe shot forward, past the beached craft. There was no sign of the men who had murdered Don Paulo.

Who had sent them? Keefe's eyes narrowed. At any rate—his hand tightened on the gun—he wouldn't be as easy a victim as the Brazilian had

been. From now on, he would be constantly on the watch. Until he had delivered the lead box to Miranda.

As the canoe moved upstream, Keefe pondered. He had occasionally heard talk of radium up country. That and rubber—not Incan gold—was the real treasure of the Amazon. Miranda's cousin, Don Paulo, had gone off on this expedition, and had been successful. But someone had talked!

The men paddled on. Generally speaking, the coast of Marajo is higher than the center, a broken ridge edging it. In the middle, Keefe had been told, was swampy Arary Lake, which, in the wet season, inundated the surrounding country.

Ducks flew up at the canoe's approach. Big *jaburú* storks wheeled in arcs, and scarlet ibises fled screaming.

Yet, there were other things, too. A huge croc slid greasily into the river, its wicked yellow eyes watching Keefe with a raw and terrible hunger. The water was teeming with *piranhas*, he knew. Glancing over-side, he noted something shining and incredibly long—a *piraçú*, the largest fresh-water fish in the world. It was impossible to catch them with rod and reel, though, for the *piranhas* tore the bait to shreds before it had more than broken the surface.

On and on they went. Finally the canoe slid against the bank close to a shack that stood on stilt-like supports, a protection against the rainy season.

ONE of the natives uttered a shrill cry. From the hut came a brown-skinned, big-shouldered man clad in ragged shirt and trousers. He shaded his eyes to peer at the boat.

There was an exchange of explosive conversation. It developed that the man was one of Don Vicente Miranda's cowboys, who would be glad to guide Keefe to the ranch.

"I have two horses here, *seu*. It is not far."

"Good." Keefe turned to where Don Paulo's body had lain. It was gone! The native rowers looked studiously away.

"Where the devil—"

"*Ora*, it fell overboard, *seu*!"

Knowing the native superstitions about corpses, Keefe could only grunt. At least, this eliminated one problem. It would have been difficult to pack Don Paulo's body to the ranch.

He gave more *milreis* to the crew and jumped ashore with his light suitcase. The cowboy was already saddling horses. He turned a flashing grin to Keefe.

"I am Juan, *seu*. Let me take your bag. Don Vicente will be glad to see you?" It was more of a question than a statement.

"Thanks. . . . Yeah, he'll be glad."

"You—eh—have a letter?"

"No. Do I need one?"

"Well, it is usual," Juan shrugged. "But probably Don Vicente will be at the ranch. He may be at the round-ups, though. In any case, he will be back soon."

Keefe swung lightly up to the saddle. Juan set the pace, and they galloped through the tall grass. In the distance cattle milled about restlessly. Beef was the chief product of Marajo.

"Mundico Boa will be at the ranch, anyway," the cowboy said conversationally. "He is the overseer. Better lift your feet high as we cross this stream. *Piranhas*—"

They went on interminably. Clouds were gathering in the north, Keefe noticed, but they were fleecy cumulus—no storm there, unless the weather changed. Still, at this time of the year the rains might break without warning. And Amazon tributaries can rise several feet overnight.

Keefe let himself relax in the creaking saddle. The *piranha* bites, hastily bandaged, were paining very little now. The sharp-edged stirrup acted as a spur, and the American rode on

faster than his sleepy-eyed companion would have preferred.

They came in sight of a good-sized hut. Several horses grazed near it.

Juan said, "The ranch isn't much farther, now. *Ora, Jayme!*" he ended, in a shout, as a giant figure appeared on the threshold—a stolid-faced native with a bandolier of cartridges across his barrel chest.

Jayne waved. He was pushed aside by a tall, thin man, with a bald head, who came out of the hut to stare. Juan reined to a halt, Keefe following his example.

"*Senhor Mundico Boa*," Juan announced. "The overseer."

Boa grunted. "And this?"

"My name's Keefe. I'm looking for Don Vicente."

"Then you have come to the right place," the overseer scowled. "Don Vicente is here, but—do you have any medicines with you?"

"What kind?"

"*Antivenin*," Boa snapped, his glance curiously intense. "Miranda's been bitten. I sent one of the boys to the ranch for medicine, but he's been gone too long. Afraid something might have happened to him. Miranda can't be moved. I was just going to send Jayme to get the stuff. Your horse fresh, Juan? Good. Go to the ranch and bring Pedro back here. Hurry!"

Juan nodded, jammed the stirrup-spurs into his steed's flank, and raced off like a thunderbolt, leaving Keefe staring after him. Boa licked his thin lips.

"This is bad country. You never know—"

"What sort of snake was it?" Keefe swung down from his saddle. "Maybe I can do something."

"Maybe. Come in."

**B**OA stepped back into the hut. The American followed. Instantly Keefe sensed something amiss. There was a huddled pile of blankets in the corner, but they had

been too hastily arranged. A trap!

Before he could turn, he felt a gun-muzzle thrust into his back. The huge Jayme nudged him forward. In the dimness Boa smiled wickedly.

"Lift your arms, *Senhor*. That is right. You need not look for Don Vicente. He is at the south ranch, attending to the round-up. Now—"

Keefe had not been entirely unprepared. Apparently taken off guard, his mind was working fast. Boa had not troubled to draw a gun. He depended on Jayme, whose weapon was pushed into Keefe's spine.

The American moved with the swiftness of a cougar. It wasn't a conventional move. He simply twisted his torso, hurling himself back, so that Jayme's gun was forced aside. The weapon snarled. Flaming agony seared a path along Keefe's lower ribs. But the native's aim had been deflected by the sudden move—not much, but enough to inflict a flesh wound instead of a fatal one.

Simultaneously Keefe's own gun leaped into his hand. He sprang away, whirling to lash out and gun-whip Jayme across the face. The native, about to fire again, shrieked and squeezed his eyes shut in pain as blood spurted from a long gash across his jaw.

Keefe reversed his weapon and slammed the butt hard against Jayme's temple. He had guessed that bare fists would probably be useless against the muscular giant.

But hard steel was another matter. Jayme collapsed, just as a bullet sang past Keefe's head. The American hurdled the native's body and plunged outside the hut. He sent a snap shot into the gloom where the gaunt shadow of Boa crouched, flame spitting from his hand.

Keefe reached his horse in two great leaps. Another movement lifted him into the saddle. He jammed the stirrups down and fired back into the hut's doorway, where Jayme's body lay motionless. Boa was not visible;

he had decided discretion was the better part of valor. But Keefe's bullet made certain that he wouldn't emerge to take better aim at his escaping quarry.

As the horse thundered on, Keefe sent a few more shots screaming toward the hut, while an occasional slug whistled past him. However, he felt safe now. He guessed that Boa would not dare take up the pursuit alone. And he was right.

The hut dropped behind and vanished in the high grass. Keefe tore a strip from his shirt and improvised a bandage for his wounded flank. It would stop the bleeding, at any rate.

So Mundico Boa, the overseer, was the killer! Well, this time his plans had failed. Keefe patted the lead box nestling against his stomach. Don Vicente—

Don Vicente did not know that his overseer was a traitor. Keefe's eyes narrowed. He soon would! What had Boa said? That Miranda was superintending a roundup at the south ranch? Where was that?

Far ahead a speck loomed. Keefe used the spurs. Soon he was close enough to distinguish the figure of Juan. He sent a bullet into the air and, when the native reined in and turned, waved for Juan to halt.

A few minutes later he came up beside the other.

"Senhor? Why do you stop me? I must get the medicine—"

"Don't bother," Keefe said grimly. "Don Vicente isn't in need of it." Swiftly he explained the circumstances.

Juan's eyes widened. "I—I do not understand. Senhor Mundico Boa is the overseer. Why should he try to kill you?"

Keefe could guess the answer to that pretty accurately, but he only shrugged. "Never mind that. Don Vicente's at the south ranch. Know where that is?"

"Of course. But it is two days away, on horseback—"

"That's where we're going," snapped Keefe.

He knew too well how much power a ranch overseer had on Marajo, and felt that his best chance—indeed, his only one—lay in reaching Miranda. In Don Vicente's absence, the cowboys would obey Boa. They would automatically suspect a stranger, and Keefe could not convince them of his *bona fides* in time. At the main ranch he would be surrounded by potential enemies, who would listen to Boa, not to him.

No—Miranda was the answer. The south ranch. And quickly!

Juan was reluctant, but Keefe insisted. At last, he nodded and capitulated.

"Don Vicente is my master—and you may speak truth. It will do no harm to guide you to the south ranch, at least."

"Fair enough. But don't get any ideas!"

THEY turned into the grassy plain till they hit another track angling southward. There was no sign of pursuit. Once Keefe called a halt while he swabbed iodine on his wound and replaced the bandage. If he stayed on Marajo much longer, he'd be mince-meat, he reflected.

He pumped Juan for information. Don Vicente had been very busy lately. He had invested in much land. There had been trouble. The cows were not calving, the snakes killed too many. There had been a drought—

That tied in. Miranda was on the verge of going broke. Obviously the radium mine would be a godsend to him. And—Juan said thoughtfully—Don Vicente soon was going to Oeiras, on the mainland, to sell much beef. A desperate attempt to unload it, at a low price, in order to secure the ready cash he needed, Keefe guessed. These ranches were always mortgaged to the hilt. The principal was never paid—that was in the books, according to the Brazilian

method of doing business—but the interest had to be met on time.

They went on. The ground grew more marshy as they advanced, though it was miles from Lago Arary, the central lake. They crossed a shallow, crocodile-infested stream and kept on at a fast trot. Sometimes they passed cattle; once a cougar broke out of the grasses and fled. A thick black serpent slithered across the trail.

"Black *jararaca*," the cowboy said. "Dangerous."

Keefe glanced at Juan. Was the native to be trusted? It was impossible to know whom to trust in this outpost island.

**H**OURS later, they stopped to give the horses a needed rest at a deserted, dilapidated shack constructed partly of dried clay and partly of half-ruined thatching. Tall grass made a veritable sea all around them. Juan killed a snake, but not in time to prevent one of the horses from taking fright and racing off. The native cursed luridly and turned to the other steed.

"I'll catch him, *Senhor*."

He was gone. Keefe felt a twinge of uneasiness. What if Juan decamped and left him alone, on foot? He couldn't travel far without a horse. However, it was too late to think of that now. The grass had swallowed Juan.

Keefe moved into the hut, disturbing a nest of rats. He wanted to examine the lead box and its contents more closely. The map proved especially interesting. It showed a tributary of the Amazon far upstream, and the location of the radium find was plainly marked. It would be invaluable to Miranda.

Keefe sighed and stowed the box back in his tattered shirt. He heard a startled yell from outside. Instantly his gun was in his hand. Trouble?

It was Juan's voice. Through it came the snarling and coughing of

some beast. Keefe sucked in his breath. He knew that sound.

Cougar!

He raced through the grass toward the noise, heedless of possible snakes. In a moment he had burst into a flattened space to see Juan standing straddle-legged, screaming, his arms lifted above his head. His strong hands gripped a cougar under the fore-legs. The beast's hind legs, with their sharp claws, were ribboning Juan's chest.

Keefe saw what had happened. The horse, frightened by the cougar, had thrown its rider, and the big cat had charged. Juan, taken by surprise, had had time only to seize the animal and lift it so that its teeth could not reach his throat. Juan's gun was on the ground, a dozen feet away. The great cat snarled savagely, its legs working like pistons. Blood formed a dark puddle on the ground.

Keefe fired from the hip. His gun barked and jolted in his palm. The cougar, shot through the head, gave a few convulsive kicks and went limp. Juan let the carcass slide to the ground. His leathery face was stained gray by exhaustion.

"*Senhor*—" he gasped—and fell. But almost immediately he was trying to rise again.

"Take it easy," Keefe snapped. "Let's see how bad you're hurt."

The wounds, though painful, were not serious. Juan grimaced and cursed as Keefe poured iodine into the gashes, the only way to avoid infection. Bandaged with his shirt, the native wriggled a few times and stood up.

"It is nothing. I have been clawed before."

"Here." Keefe proffered his brandy flask. Juan took it gratefully.

"There. I can walk, yes. Let us go back to the hut." He refused Keefe's offer of help.

At the threshold of the shack Keefe whipped out his gun to aim at a

*(Turn to page 100)*

# A THOUSAND YEARS OLD AND STILL LIVING!

A strange method of mind and body control that often leads to immense powers never before experienced is announced by Edwin J. Dingle, well-known explorer and geographer. It is said to bring about almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind. Many report improvement in health. Others acquire superb bodily strength, secure better positions, turn failure into success. Often with surprising speed, talents, ability and a more magnetic personality are developed.

The method was found in remote and mysterious Tibet, formerly a forbidden country rarely visited by outsiders and often called the land of miracles in the astounding books written about it. Here, behind the highest mountains in the world, Mr. Dingle learned the extraordinary system he is now disclosing to the Western World.

He maintains that all of us are giants in strength and mind power, capable of surprising feats, from the delay of old age to the prolonging of youth and the achievement of dazzling business and professional success. From childhood, however, we are hypnotized, our powers put to sleep by the suggestions of associates, by what we read and by various experiences.

To realize their really marvelous powers, men and women must escape from this hypnotism. The method found by Mr. Dingle in Tibet is said to be remarkably instrumental in free-

ing the mind of the hypnotizing ideas that paralyze the giant powers within us.

Our accepted ideas of old age and death, he claims, would prove utterly wrong if we could escape from their hypnotizing influence. He points to the exotic Joshua Trees of the California Desert, many of which are over a thousand years old and still living. Some are thought to be two and three thousand years old. Life and youth, he says, can persist several times longer than people think. In Tibet this is believed and certain methods, based on this belief, are employed. Incredible ages are often ascribed to sages there. "The methods are too new in the Western World," he says, "for us to have authoritative data. But they may be instrumental, meantime, in prolonging our youth and increasing our mental, physical and spiritual powers."

"The time has come," he declares, "for every enlightened man and woman to achieve the greater health, success and happiness possible through this ancient but remarkable method of mastery." His amazing 9,000 word treatise is now being offered by The Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 96-L, Los Angeles, Calif. They offer to send it free to any readers of this paper who quickly send their names and addresses. Readers are urged to write promptly for the free treatise.

slithering dark shape gliding along the floor. Juan caught his arm.

"That is no jararaca. It looks like that devil, but it is harmless. Leave it; it kills rats."

"Okay." Keefe offered the flask again. "How do you feel?"

Juan's lips were compressed. "I am no weakling, *Senhor*. These are mere scratches. Rest, now, while I get the horses."

"But—what the devil!"

Anger and hurt pride sprang into the dark eyes. "I am not a woman, *Senhor*!"

He was, at least, rather like a child, Keefe thought watching the wounded cowboy swing out of the hut. Sooner than admit pain, he'd have collapsed in his tracks.

**K**EEFE began to search the floor. At last, he found what he wanted, a loose stone at the base of a wall. With the aid of another rock he broke it in two. Then he fitted it back into place. Good! It looked like part of the wall, but there was a space left behind it now—a hollow compartment in the dried, sun-baked mud. An ideal spot to hide the map and the pitchblende. But—

Keefe glanced sharply around the hut. This was perilous country. And there were men in these jungles who would go to any length to secure Don Paulo's discovery. Even here behind those bricks it might not be safe. A feeling of impending doom seemed to weight the close air in the hut. If the lead box should fall into the wrong hands—

A soft, slurring sound disturbed the silence. Keefe stiffened, then relaxed when he saw the harmless black snake slide across the floor. Suddenly Keefe grinned. He removed the lead box from his shirt and strode swiftly to the base of the wall.

Ten minutes later Keefe was riding southward again with Juan. The brief rest had given the horses fresh speed. By pushing hard, they might

reach Don Vicente soon after sun-down.

The thing happened without warning. After fording a narrow stream, Keefe spurred his horse up a steep bank. Too late he caught the gleaming of sunlight on wire. The horse tripped and came down with a crash, throwing its rider. Before Keefe could recover himself, a heavy body smashed down on him; a gun-butt cracked sickeningly against his head. The world spun dizzily. Then it righted itself. He sprang up, reaching for his gun. It was gone.

The giant figure of Jayme stood nearby. He grinned savagely, pistol in hand. Near him was the overseer, Boa, his hairless skull shining, a rifle aimed unwaveringly at the mounted Juan.

Keefe whispered an oath. To fall into such a trap—

"Okay, what now?" he murmured. Boa said, "Put up your hands. Quickly!"

Keefe glanced at the mounted figure of the cowboy. "Juan!" he snapped. "Use your gun!"

Juan did not move. Boa laughed softly.

"He works for me. I pay him well to take my orders instead of Mirandas'. Why do you suppose he guided you to the hut where I was waiting? Why do you suppose he took this roundabout path to the south ranch, so I'd have time to catch up with you?"

Keefe's stomach crawled coldly. Juan—a traitor!

"I get it," he said. "Juan was planted to ambush Don Paulo, in case the natives didn't do their job."

"He was told by them that you had the lead box. That Don Paulo had given it to you. So he led you to me—and did what I told him."

Keefe's lips twisted. "And you're double-crossing Miranda."

Boa smiled. "A native came down-river and told me Don Paulo had made his find. So I used *milreis*

judiciously. That radium mine is worth a fortune. I intend to have it for myself. Let me have the box, *Senhor*."

Silently Keefe took the coffer from his shirt and tossed it to Boa. The overseer's eyes gleamed as he pried open the lid. Then he snarled a curse.

"Dog! The box is empty! Jayme, search him!"

Keefe made no resistance.

"Nothing? His shoes—his belt!"

"It's no use," Keefe said. A look of grim resolve covered his set features. "You won't find what you want. Why don't you forget about it?"

Boa patted his rifle. "It pleases you to jest. But are you such a fool as to think I would give up so easily? Let me remind you that there are *piranhas* in this stream. You understand?"

Keefe shot a quick glance at Juan, but the cowboy's face was impassive. Boa nodded.

"You are barefooted now. Your wounds will attract the fish. Wade into the stream, or I will shoot you—painfully, but not fatally. When you are ready to talk, come out. On this side."

Keefe's eyes narrowed. Boa meant it, he knew. But maybe there was a way—

Silently he walked down the bank, the armed Jayme at his heels. He stepped into the warmish water. It lapped up above his knees.

"Now stand there. Do not move," came the curt order from Boa.

**P**AİN shot through Keefe's calf. He caught his breath, hesitated a moment longer, then leaped for the bank.

Cursing, he tore a *piranha* from its grip on his flesh.

Boa said, "Well?"

Keefe glanced at the stream. "I hid the stuff in the hut where we stayed to rest the horses. Behind a stone in the wall."

"We shall see if you are lying. Juan, you know the place?"

"I'll tell him," Keefe said wearily, nursing his leg. "Why should I get my brains blown out for *Miranda*, anyway? Go back to the hut, Juan, and look for the white stone in the north wall near the floor. Pry it open and bring what's there. Better leave *all* the stuff in the lead box. Radium's dangerous stuff." Keefe gave the native a penetrating look.

Boa chuckled and tossed the box to Juan. "You are wise, *Senhor*. Perhaps you may be of use to me. But I do not think so. Well, Juan? Why do you wait?"

The cowboy wheeled his horse and splashed through the stream. Boa put down his rifle and rolled a cigarette. But Jayme's pistol was still leveled relentlessly.

Time dragged on. Keefe brooded over his leg and sent sidewise glances at his captors. No chance of escape. A *caiman* splashed in the stream. A few drops of rain fell from the overhanging clouds. Boa looked up.

"Good. The rain will wipe out all traces."

Keefe knew what that meant. He stood up painfully, and found a cigarette. Then hoofbeats sounded. Boa tensed, but relaxed as Juan reappeared, galloping through the water and up the bank. He reined to a halt, drew the lead box out of his shirt, and tossed it to Boa.

"It was there, Juan?"

"It was there. A rock and a paper, hidden in the wall."

Boa opened the box. Something long, black, and sinuous exploded out of it. The overseer screamed and staggered back. The snake writhed about his arm. Its fangs were buried in his wrist.

Keefe had been waiting for just that—counting on it, gambling on it. Jayme's attention was momentarily distracted. The American sprang at him.

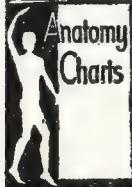
The giant whirled, snarling, and

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lifted his gun. A bullet ripped through Keefe's shirt, grazing his ribs. Then the two men came to grips.

Keefe's hand closed on the pistol. He twisted sharply, hearing a sickening crack as Jayme's stubby finger caught in the trigger-guard and broke. The big man screamed with pain. One fist swung around in a bone-crushing blow.

But Keefe wasn't there to receive it. He ducked, heard the crash of a rifle and the flat report of a revolver. Something burned into his left arm. But he didn't need that arm. He put all his force into a sledge-hammer punch that smashed solidly against Jayme's underslung jaw.

The giant went over backward, out cold. Keefe whirled. Juan was sitting on his horse, motionless, and Boa was on the ground, twisting a little. There was a bullet wound in Boa's shoulder.

Juan said, "It is finished, Senhor."

Keefe said, "I—guess it is." He found it difficult to believe.

The cowboy swung to the ground. "I shall tie Jayme and we will take him with us to Don Vicente, who will administer justice. It was clever of you Senhor, to leave that little black snake with the other things in the wall of the hut."

Keefe licked his lips. "Thought it might scare off Boa if he found the cache. It looks like a *jararaca*, all right. I—wasn't sure you'd play along with me."

Juan looked surprised. "It is true Senhor Boa paid me to help kill Don Paulo—or you—but I did not know you then. You had not saved my life. I kept my eyes open for traps after that. But I was not quite wary enough. After you were captured I had to wait my chance to help you. Both Jayme and Senhor Boa are expert shots, and I could not kill them from ambush because there was no cover close enough."

Keefe gulped. "I see. So you took

my hint and put the snake in the lead box with the other stuff. Well, I don't think Don Vicente will be too hard on you, under the circumstances. Help me bandage my arm, and we can ride after him. Better see about Boa's wound, too."

"Senhor Boa will not need bandages," Juan said gently.

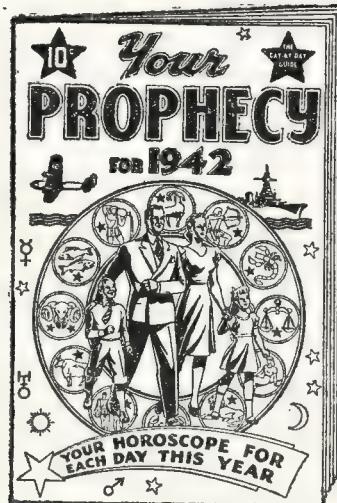
"Eh?" Keefe stared at him.

"You gave me an excellent hint when you hid that harmless little snake that looks like a jararaca in the cache. When I saw it there, I thought that I might improve on your idea. It took me only five minutes to find a real jararaca—"

Keefe swallowed. He looked at Boa. The man was dead. And the manner of his dying unpleasantly obvious. The crushed body of the snake was slowly twisting and squirming beside him.

"There is only one trouble with you Americans," Juan explained. "You are too soft-hearted. We men of Marajo are much more logical. Besides—you saved my life, Senhor!"

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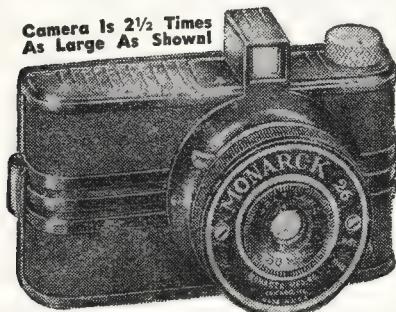
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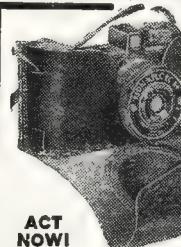
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## THE GLOBE TROTTER

(Continued from page 13)

were sufficient advertisement that the carnival was going on.

And that was something. For the carnival in Manila is unique, so unusual and diversified in its interesting features that it might well take the entire space that can be devoted to this article. Tribesmen from the islands come in, and take up their residence in nearby districts. They are under the benevolent protection of their own rulers, and while one might not be able to forget that the little Igorot from Northern Luzon was a direct descendant of headhunters, no feeling of fear is inspired. Instead, the spirit of brotherhood is everywhere in evidence.

The people in Manila itself require more sophisticated amusements than the carnival affords, but the tribal folk are amused and impressed with much simpler things. And they seem to get just as much out of it all. They play hard—and they work hard, and merit their playtime. One of the things that impresses the traveler in Manila is the amount of work the women do. The cigar industry of the Philippines is more than proud of its displays, and women are chiefly responsible for them, as they sit at long tables with bunches of tobacco leaves hanging within reach overhead. The cigars they make are among the best of their grade in the world.

### Does a Sailor Need a Boulevard?

On market days—and every day seems to be a market day during the carnival—taxis and street cars are forced to give way to wooden-wheeled carts, packed high with native produce and each driven by a couple of native women or a small boy. If you've been reading about copra in your latest copy of *THRILLING ADVENTURES*, you have a chance to watch Philippine natives opening coconuts as the first step toward the preparation of this trade product.

After my friend and I had absorbed some of the atmosphere of the carnival and the fair of native products that is one of its chief features, I suggested a drive along Admiral Dewey Boulevard. In recalling my Manila visit I mentioned this to some American friends later on, and had a laugh when one of them said:

"Why did Dewey need a boulevard? He came on a boat!"

I suppose I could have told this inquirer that the American fleet rested in Hampton Roads, and that the navies of the world have used roads long before they were ever adapted for horseback, carriage or the modern motor vehicle. But why go into that?

Dewey Boulevard runs from the Luneta and Burnham Green out to Pasay. Burnham Green is an interesting section of Manila, and is particularly worthy of mention because it commemorates Burnham, the landscape artist responsible for the layout of modern Manila. Even while I was taking in these interesting visits, though, part of my mind was still on the carnival that had been left behind, and some interesting experiences there I would never for-

get, I knew then—and it is just as alive in my mind now—that I would never forget my meeting with one of the sergeants of the Philippine Constabulary. That meeting is of keenly renewed interest to me now, for the same Constabulary is the native group that General Douglas MacArthur used as the nucleus for the highly efficient armed force that opposed the Japanese immediately after the little yellow men of Nippon forced our United States into war.

The sergeant had come down from the Igorot country of Northern Luzon, where now the Japanese have made their earliest invasion attempts, and he invited Dirk and myself to go back with him. We were more than willing to accept that invitation, for Luzon held out the promise of more adventure to me.

The staff car of the Philippine Constabulary was a modern eight-cylinder job, and looked as though more than equipped for the job of climbing some of the mountains of the Cordillera Central of Luzon. There were two main roads leading to the north. One of these skirted the west coast of the Island of Luzon through the vicinity of Lingayan and Baguio.

#### Home Work

As we rode along, jungle vistas along this route were a revelation to me. In other parts of the Malay Archipelago, I had often visited Dyak villages built out over the water, and had marveled at the manner in which people were able to get along, even though it might mean tying the youngest child to the back porch to keep him from falling into the Pacific Ocean. The same sort of huts house a part of the Philippine fishing population. The height of the hut above the water depends upon the size of the tides in a particular area. Some of the buildings look as though an ocean liner could be docked alongside them.

"Would you like to see a native potter?" the sergeant asked me, as we approached one such village.

"Of course," I replied eagerly.

Dirk was as much interested as I, so the sergeant turned the car into a rural road that was beaten hard by the tramping of many oxen. We moved along up a graded slope, and suddenly came out into a large clearing. Here we found thatched huts, crude luxuries, and a people without any inhibitions.

Some of the women folk looked at us curiously noted the uniform of the sergeant, then turned back to their household chores. Some were seeding cotton, others were brushing the thread. The cooks of the group were pounding seeds and grains into the pulp and flower that would be the raw material for the mid-day meal.

The potter we had especially come to see was squatted on his haunches before a primitive wheel. His clay and other materials were handy all about him. Several finished bowls were drying in the sun, and would soon be turned over to the capable women for colorful decoration. We

[Turn page]



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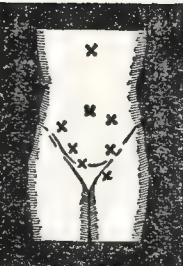


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watched the turbaned worker as he went about the business, entirely oblivious to the fact that he had company.

Overhead droned patrol planes from the United States base at Cavite, but they caused no comment. There was no pause in the routine of the village. The sergeant looked at me to see what I thought of it all, I suppose, and he must have seen how pleased I was with the simplicity and peace of the surroundings. We were invited to stay for lunch, then resumed our journey to the north.

We reached Baguio, one hundred and sixty miles north of Manila by nightfall. Baguio is the second city in the Philippine Islands, and was once intended to be the summer capital. We planned to spend the night at Camp John Hay, the U. S. Military encampment outside the city, and were more than delighted with the reception given us there by the American armed forces.

### They Fight For Us

Baguio is the main community on the two North Luzon roads already mentioned. One of these is known as the Baguio Road, while the other has the rather colorful and tongue-twisting name of the Naguilian Trail. The city is nearly a mile above sea level, and one of the chief fascinations about the journey to it is the changing vegetation, a scenic splendor that it would take the pen of a poet to do full justice.

I know I was amazed when Dirk asked the sergeant:

"What kind of trees do they have around Baguio?" and the sergeant soberly replied: "Baguio is famous for its pine trees."

D. H. Burnham, already mentioned as the landscape artist for Manila, was also responsible for the layout of Baguio. He worked on this job back in 1904.

Considering that the city is in the center of the Igorot country, the development of the place is even more interesting than the better known Manila. Like any modern city, Baguio has telephones, electric lights, water works, a sewage system, and an ice plant. But the most interesting thing to me is the fact that five native Igorots form the advisory council that is a part of the city government.

The Philippines are interesting islands, inhabited by a people who deserve all that can be done for them. Right now they are gamely fighting a battle that is our own. The population and economic life of the islands run the gamut from the simple native who is comparable to our own American Indian to the educated Christian and Mohammedan leaders who have been so adept in applying the improvements that American initiative and endeavor have brought to the Commonwealth. Good luck, and good hunting to our Little Brown Brothers, and the assurance that a helping hand from all of us here will be forthcoming.

### Our Authors Speak

By a fortunate coincidence, Ponga Jim, our fictional expert on the Far East, is the leading character in this month's



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sand years, and the methods of navigation are the same as in the time of Columbus. Villages are usually of coral or coarse grass, and some are surrounded by crumbling walls, pierced with loopholes.

The Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba, in the northern extremity of the sea, are divided by the Peninsula of Sinai. Mount Sinai is known locally as Jebel Mussa, but is visible from the Gulf of Suez from only one small area due to intervening mountains, the peninsula being one of the roughest spots on earth.

Most of the supplies for the British forces in Egypt, Libya and the Near East are coming through the Red Sea. Ships have been sunk, and more will be. The war may be decided by the ships carrying supplies over that vital lifeline.

The character of Selim in my story is taken to some extent from a former smuggler who sailed north from Aden with me, on one trip, and who took me into many of the out-of-the-way corners.

I hope you and the readers will enjoy this story of Ponga Jim in the Red Sea, and in this yarn, like all of the stories about him, all the places mentioned are real places, just as presented in the story.

Good luck, and good reading.

Louis L'Amour.

We're sure the chronicles of Ponga Jim are in good hands, Louis, and we'll be looking for other stories like "South of Suez." Since Ponga Jim's home bases in the Malay area are in danger now, however, maybe he'd better get back to help straighten things out.

Now we'll delve down into the other side of the mail bag, and see what you readers have to say. First of all there's a little note from Sal Velardi. Sal is in the United States Navy, and is helping to man the first line of defense of this great country of ours. Give them an extra sock for all of us, Sal.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I would very much like to join your club. I am twenty-two and love traveling and adventure for which I joined Uncle Sam's Navy, though my main reason was to learn a trade. I like the Navy and wish I had joined up while younger. I am stationed here at the base since May of this year. I am writing to you, hoping to correspond with people all over the world. In fact, anyone who would care to correspond with me, and I promise to answer all letters.

Hoping to get my membership card soon, and please find enclosed a self-addressed envelope and coupon.

Sal Velardi.

U. S. Submarine Base, Box 19, Coco Solo, Panama, C. Z.

Our next letter comes from up in the wilds of Alaska, and after you've read what Mr. Shellabarger has to say, you'll agree that when you can get mail only once a month, you're sure away from things.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have just read my first issue of the THRILLING ADVENTURES. I was so pleased with it that I sent in my subscription right away. With so much about Alaska in your column I think I would like to join your club, so please send me your membership card. You spoke of the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. I have been there. In fact, there isn't much of Alaska that I haven't seen. I trap and have a large dog team.

In this part of Alaska there are plenty of fur-bearing animals—mink, marten, otter, weasel, wolves, coyotes, foxes, wolverine, beaver, lynx, and muskrats. There is, in the way of game, sheep, caribou, moose, bear—black, brown, and grizzly—goats and ruckuk.

The mail is brought to Skwentna by airplane which visits here once a month. Skwentna is a hundred miles west northwest of Anchorage. I write letters all over the world and will be glad to write to my pen pals who want me to. Although I have been in Mexico, Central America, and the

U. S., the only place that I have really traveled is Alaska.

I will be more than glad to answer all questions to the best of my ability. I will be glad to hear from you and answer any questions, although if you have been up here there maybe isn't much you don't know about Alaska.

Please excuse my mistakes, as I am a very poor typist.

Edwin L. Shellabarger.

Yes, Ed, we've been up in your neighborhood. It's the kind of country I'd like to go back to after this war business is over. Maybe we'll be able to get together some time in the future. I'm sure any of our globe-trotter members would be more than glad to correspond with you. Good hunting.

J. B. Le Compte comes in with a bit of a squawk and some kind words about your Globe Trotter. We're glad to have both of these sentiments, and don't mind telling you about it. Looks as though you've got the dead-wood on us in that "Arrows of Invasion" story, but we're going to refer it to the author, and let him give us some sort of a response. The discussion of various types of swords is more than interesting.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Here's a howl from the host.

One of our clan was in the Battle of Hastings, or more properly the fight for the Hill of Senlac, but even Big Hugo could not have cut a portcullis or drawbridge chain, as described in "The Arrows of Invasion."

Neither the Normans nor the Saxons, as I verily believe, had high-class weapons. The workmanship was crude, the weapons generally out of balance, mostly too hard or too soft. Such blades would either break or bend on contact with heavy drawbridge or portcullis chains. When, by accident, a sword of supreme quality was produced, its origin was assigned to supernatural beings; such as Excalibur, for instance. They did not use these on the chain gangs.

So far as I have learned, there were no outstanding swordsmiths in all Europe north of the Alps and Pyrenees. The Gauls lost to Caesar because of inferior weapons. This condition existed until blades began to come from Italy and Spain, or more rarely, from Isfahan, where the great Assad Ullah held forth.

Percy and Douglas had "swords of fyn Milan." King Richard's stunt was probably done with a weapon brought back from the Crusades, and certain of the wealthy or fortunate Scots earls had blades by Andrea Ferrari. But Andy the Blacksmith and his fellow forgers of Toledo and Isfahan were not forging in 1066. Damascus blades, quothe? Yeah. But these mostly came from the Isfahan district.

That brings me to Iran and the Globe Trotter's trans-Persian trip. Very interesting, indeed. I am an earnest student of the Persian tongue, and am on the warpath in search of more Persian books.

I have been a globe trotter for some months, but none of the members write me. Watta da mat? Come on, you-all, we 'uns am only human.

Sincerely yours,

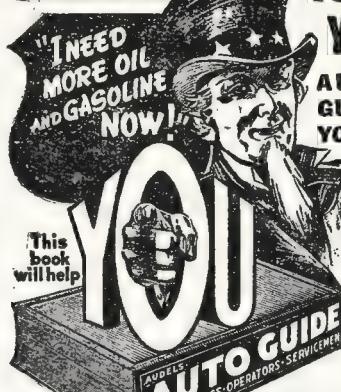
J. B. Le Compte.

2537 Antoinette Avenue,  
Detroit, Mich.

You realize, of course, Mr. LeCompte, that your Globe Trotter can't be as well versed in Persian books as a student would be. The little lady who presides over the home port seems to think there are too many books around as it is. I've accumulated, rather than collected, them in various parts of the world, and refer to others from time to time, of course. You're probably familiar with G. Rawlinson's books, "The Five Great Monarchies," "The Sixth

[Turn page]

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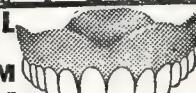
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Monarchy" and the "Seventh Monarchy." Then I've enjoyed S. Lane Poole's "Mohammedan Dynasties," and such books as Lieutenant C. R. Low's "History of the Indian Navy."

Mr. Le Compte has also sent along with his letter, his impression of a Scotch tank jockey, which he calls "Tankie Dundee." Warm up on your Scotch, and see how you like it.

### TANKIE DUNDEE

Tae th' former horse troopers 'twas Claverhouse spoke:  
"Th' steeds they ha'e brocht us ha'e gat tae be broke.  
Sae pu' oot th' horse stalls an' lay doon some planks—  
I'll show ye th' way tae tak' care o' these tanks.

"Oh, fill th' crank case an' fill th' gas tank,  
An' wind up th' thing wi' yon lang-handled crank.  
Then open th' barn dure an' lat me rowl free.  
Tae smoke up th' country," says Tankie Dundee.  
"Thraw awa' a' yer claymore, for naiver a man  
Can wield a pig-sticker inside o' a can;  
An' this is my rede unto a' ye dragoons—  
Machine guns are better than yon musketoons.

"Th' steeds, sae they tell me, breathe fire an' smoke;  
Their sides are nae hairy, their backs can't be broke.

Th' saddles are wide an' can easy haund three—  
Ridin' inside, not outside," quo' Tankie Dundee.  
"I th' days o' ma youth I wes fu' often tanked  
As becam' a guid Scot. May th' Guid Laird be thanked.

"Twill noo be th' same. When I ride o'er th' lea,  
Juist follow ma gas-tank," quo' Tankie Dundee.

Dundee noo hes started an' rowls up th' street  
Wi' a honk an' a clank an' a speed nae tae fleet,  
Whilst th' fowk by th' roadside howl lood i' their glee—  
"Yer bonnet is greasy, oh Tankie Dundee."

Tosh, lad! Ye're a loon! Auld Dundee is deid  
An' doon deep th' Deil i' Hell hauds his heid;  
Dinna resurrect him! It wadna be recht!  
They wad kick aff his trews th' noo 'n a fecht!

J. B. Le Compte.

Now then, we'll hop over to Great Falls, Montana, for a postal chat with Andy Novlevanko. Speak your piece, Andy:

Dear Globe Trotter:

I wish to be enrolled as a member of the Globe Trotter's Club. I am interested in adventure and will endeavor to answer all questions asked me by other members regarding the places with which I am familiar.

My hobby is collecting book match covers. If any one is interested, please write to me.

I am sending a stamped self-addressed envelope and I would like to get your fine membership card. I am seventeen years old.

Andy Novlevanko.

519 4th Street South,  
Great Falls, Montana.

We've done right well by the boys in the last few pages. This month our representative of the so-called weaker sex is Dolores Noumberg. She's anxious to hear from some of you Globe Trotters. So write us a pack of letters.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Please enroll me as a member of your Globe Trotter's Club.

Have been a constant reader of your wonderful short stories for over a year, but never have I had the impulse to become a member as I have now.

Am twenty-two, and my hobbies are photography and dress designing.

Would write to everyone, old and young, but would be most especially interested in writing to those in far-off places.

Will close now, hoping to hear from many of your readers.

Dolores L. Noumberg.

1453 Winnemac Avenue,  
Chicago, Illinois.

Your Globe Trotter doesn't know much about dress designing, but it ought to be plenty interesting to some of our feminine readers. How about it, girls? Why not tell us about your hobbies, too?

Edward W. Long sounds as though he's already had a fascinating life, and I'll bet he's making big plans for the future, too. This is the kind of real-life adventure that makes the arm-chair adventures jump right out of their seats.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Just a line to let you know how I enjoy reading your **THRILLING ADVENTURES**. I've had a good share of adventure myself and your books help me use my imagination and put myself in any place I choose. I'm interested in archeology and exploration. I have just returned from a trip the entire length of the Amazon River, and from Pará, Brazil, to Iquitos, Peru. I was alone on that trip and made it in a small boat. I was four months in that country and had some real times. I speak Spanish and Portuguese, which helped a lot on my journeys. I'd like to join your club if I may. Thanks, and yours for adventure,

Edward W. Long.

Box 2628,  
Cristobal, Canal Zone.

That Amazon country is rather interesting, Ed, if you don't mind all kinds of noises and bugs and things. But we're glad to have them, too.

Another member of the distaff side of the family wants to join our club, and correspond with our far-flung membership. You girls ought to have a lot to talk about, so drop Rhoda a line.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I wish to become a member of your Globe Trotter's Club. I would like very much to write to friends who will write to me, as I get so lonely. I am a divorced woman who works five days a week and lives alone in a little apartment. So I would have time to answer all letters that are written to me.

Please send me a membership card. I am enclosing ten cents' worth of stamps to send card or letter. I am very sorry I did not have a self-addressed envelope.

Rhoda Smith.

657 E. Lehman Street, Lebanon, Pa.

That about brings us to the end of the mail department, what with other matters of pressing interest closing in on us. I know you're going to want to get a little advance information on our future plans.

#### OUR NEXT ISSUE

With the eyes of the world centered on the war action in the Pacific and Far East area, we feel that it is particularly interesting to our readers to have some stories about this field that bring us colorful background and exciting action. The next issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** will bring us two of these yarns as the featured stories.

One of your popular authors, William O'Sullivan, has written us a complete novel titled, **SINGAPORE SONG**, which not only takes us behind the scenes in the famous British Outpost at the lower tip of the Straits Settlements and the Malay Peninsula, but we also find his characters becoming involved in intrigue that reaches

[Turn page]



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Coming closer to home, we're going to bring you, in next month's issue, a smashing novelet of action in Southern California by one of your favorites, Henry Kuttner. The title is **BATTLE STATIONS**—and it's to the battle stations that our courageous defenders go in this exciting yarn of sabotage, Japanese menace and secret underground airplane hangars.

You'll like the hero, Lieutenant Michael Arledge of Naval Intelligence, who has a big job ahead of him when he has to stop an expected Jap attack before it starts! **BATTLE STATIONS** is a novelet of valor and patriotism — and we're proud to schedule it for next month's issue of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**.

Using the world itself as a palette upon which our authors can and do paint their fictional pictures, the line-up of short stories scheduled for this issue is also a varied and dramatic one. You're going to find tales of the doings in Europe, Africa, and the North American continent. Reserve your copy of **THRILLING ADVENTURES** now.

*Are You a Member of Our Club?*

Since the Sunday when the Japanese bombers raided Pearl Harbor, a good many

The Globe Trotter,  
**THRILLING ADVENTURES**,  
10 East 40th Street,  
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I wish to be enrolled as a member of the *Globe Trotters' Club*. I am interested in adventure and will endeavor to answer all questions asked me by other members regarding the places with which I am familiar.

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To obtain a membership card, enclose  
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Americans have suddenly come to the realization that the world isn't such a big place any more. Perhaps we are a bit optimistic in hoping that our circle of Globe Trotters in this magazine is going to be a continuing force for international amity, now that we are confronted with a world at war. Nevertheless the spirit that has animated the Globe Trotters' Club ever since its inception ten years ago, is still the spirit of the American people.

We want to have friends all over, but if the forces of war make this impossible, then we can at least carry on with our friends in Pan America. There are twenty-one republics and the Dominion of Canada, providing a field for understanding that is unparalleled anywhere on the globe. So, if you haven't joined our world-wide club, by all means do so. Just clip out, fill in and mail the coupon on the opposite page. A list of some of our new members will appear next issue.

I'm sure you've found the letters in this department interesting, and we're more than anxious to see other letters about your experiences from you, and you, and you. If you're not a great hand at letter-writing, drop us a card. Let us know how you like the stories in **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, what you think of particular writers, and the kind of yarns you'd like to have in future issues.

That's only a part of your job as a member of this club. The main effort is to get along with your neighbors, and help them to know and understand the people who are our friends. As soon as we receive your membership application, we'll send along your membership card. One of the nice things about this club is that there are no dues nor fees. Our main interest is in banding together true-blue Americans in an association that will help to bring about friendship and understanding among our foreign friends and neighbors in all parts of the globe.

So, let's hear from you, and keep those membership applications rolling. I'll be looking for your postcards and letters commenting on the stories, and outlining your own globe-trotting experiences. Address your communications to the Globe Trotter, **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. Let's get back to all-out Defense now until next issue.

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

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**THRILLING ADVENTURES**  
EVERY ISSUE

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Before Rubber Goes Higher **2 25**  
**GOODYEAR-FIRESTONE**  
**GOODRICH-FISK-U.S.**

And Other Standard Makes

National Defense calls for rubber conservation! Crude rubber prices are up! Tires are getting scarcer daily. Our Standard Brand reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired by experts with

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TO MAKE THIS UNIQUE ....

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**Car Owners:** You are invited to make a gas saving road test with the Vacu-matic on your own car, with the absolute understanding that unless it proves to you that it will save you up to 30% on gas and improve your car performance, the test will cost you nothing. Investigate this remarkable discovery that trims dollars off gasoline bills—gives you worthwhile gas savings—more power—greater speed—quicker pickup—faster acceleration.

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Vacu-matic is *entirely different!* It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely automatic and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing automatically to save dollars on gas costs.

### Proven By Test

In addition to establishing new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic has proven itself on thousands of road tests and on dynamometer tests which duplicate road conditions and record accurate mileage and horse power increases.

### Fits All Cars—Easy to Install

Vacu-matic is constructed of six parts assembled and fused into one unit, adjusted and sealed at the factory. Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can install in ten minutes. The free offer coupon will bring all the facts. Mail it today!

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### Sworn Proof of Gas Savings

This certifies that I have carefully read 300 original letters received from Vacu-matic users testifying to gas savings up to 30%, many reporting added power, smoother running, and quicker pick-up. These letters are just a small part of the larger file of enthusiastic user letters that I saw at the company offices.

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*Marion J. Elmer*  
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W. F. CLAUZING,  
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Rebuilding type-  
writers for over  
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It's sent to you in Underwood packing  
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## A NOISELESS MACHINE

Latest achievement in typewriters! Provides writing perfection with SILENCE. For those who want the advantages of a quiet home or office. This Underwood's Noiseless mechanism eliminates the nerve shattering clatter common to many models. An aid to better work because it allows clear thinking, reduces fatigue, improves accuracy. This typewriter disturbs no one, for it is almost impossible to hear it operate a few feet away. You get all the features of an Underwood PLUS Noiseless typing.

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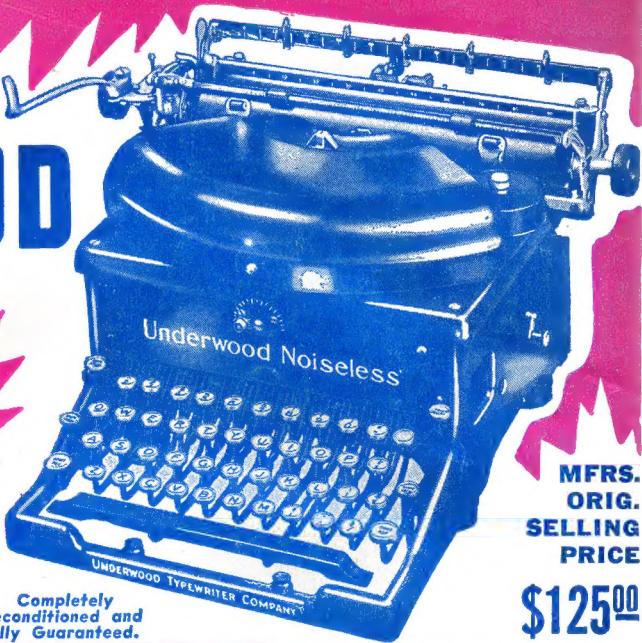
OVER 5,000,000 UNDERWOODS NOW IN USE! Recognized as the finest, strongest built! Here is an office size Underwood with late modern features that give you SILENT TYPING. Has all standard equipment—keyboard, 2 colors, back spacer, automatic reverse, tabulator, etc. THERE IS NO RISK! SEE BEFORE YOU BUY ON MY 10 DAY NO OBLIGATION TRIAL PLAN. If you wish send the machine back at my expense.

## WIDE 14" CARRIAGES

Wide carriage machines for government reports, large office forms, billing, etc., only \$3.00 extra with order. Takes paper 14" wide, has 12" writing line. A Real Buy in a Reconditioned Underwood Noiseless!

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Completely  
Reconditioned and  
Fully Guaranteed.

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## EXTRA VALUE! TYPEWRITER STAND



For those who have no typewriter stand or handy place to use a machine, I make this special offer. This attractive stand that ordinarily sells for \$4.85 can be yours for only \$3.50 extra—payable 25c a month. Quality built. Note all its convenient features.

## NO MONEY DOWN 10 DAY TRIAL Easy Terms—10c A Day

No obligation to buy. See machine on wide open 10 day trial. Pay me no money until you test, inspect, compare, and use this Underwood Noiseless. Judge for yourself without hurry and without risk. When you are convinced that this is the biggest typewriter bargain you have ever seen then say, "I'll Buy." Send only 70c a week or \$3.00 a month until term price of only \$43.85 is paid. Try it first, enjoy a full 10 days' steady use. There is no red tape or investigation—My offer is exactly as I state it.

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I back this machine with my personal 2-yr. guarantee that it is in A-1 condition in every respect—that it will give first class service. Over 30 years of fair dealing and my 200,000 satisfied customers prove the soundness of my golden rule policy and prove that dealing direct with me saves you money.

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Check for typewriter stand (\$3.50 extra—payable 25c a month). Stand sent on receipt of first payment on Underwood.

Name ..... Age .....

Typewritten signatures not acceptable

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State .....

CAUTION—For quick shipment give occupation and reference

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